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THE HUNGARIAN EXILES

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—BY—

BENJAMIN COWELL.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
PORTER V. SKINNER.

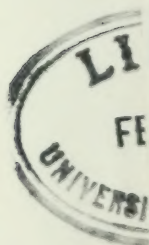
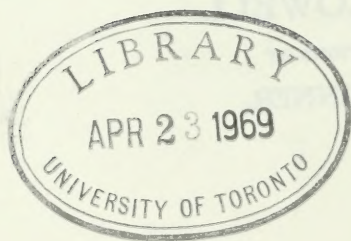


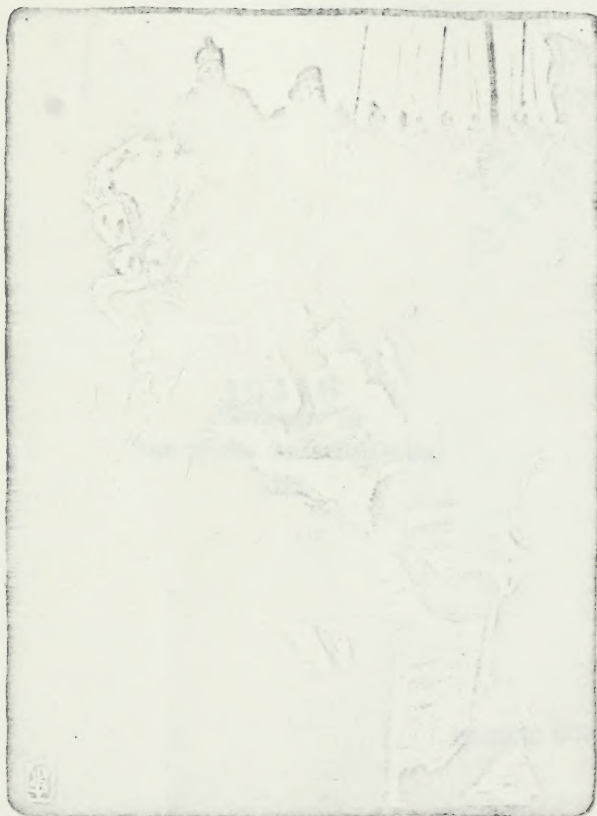
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"Look at them, O Hungary! as they come riding down to thee in
all their beauty."—Page 219.



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PREFACE

This story is based upon characters and incidents in the eleventh century: Bela I., afterwards King of Hungary, and his two sons, Geyza and Ladislaus, being the central figures of the tale. The unselfish natures of the two brothers, and their devoted attachment to each other through all vicissitudes, form one of the unique traditions of the mediæval age. I have chosen the period of their father's exile-life in Poland, where they were born and reared, to fabricate a possible picture of their boyhood, surrounding them with influences most probable to account for the character history ascribes to them as Hungarian heroes.

BENJAMIN COWELL.

PEORIA, Oct. 16, 1899.

CHAPTER I.

THE winter of 1041 was very severe throughout all Europe, and travel was made easier, in one way, by the freezing of the rivers. Therefore Bernard II, Duke of Saxony—a province of the German Empire whose rulers at that time were unusually independent—thought it a good time to travel with his household; and he decided to make a visit to his relatives in Poland, King Casimir and his Saxon mother, Ryxa. He also anticipated much pleasure in meeting that distinguished soldier, Bela, the exiled prince of Hungary, who had married Ryxa's daughter, Gisela, and who, together with his wife and two sons, Geyza aged ten, and Ladislaus, seven, formed part of the royal family at Gnesen.

These little princes were not the last to learn of the intended visit; and as the Duke's son, Ordulf,

was to be one of the party, and was just the age of Ladislaus, they shared the excitement of their elders, and helped, or hindered, in the preparations for the entertainment of the expected guests. As the time drew near for their arrival, the nervousness of the old Saxon dame increased, and so did the questions of her grand children.

“Will they come to-morrow, grandam?”

“Will they come the next day? or the next?—or next to that?”

“Even if thou knowest not, it would be kind in thee to say one way or the other. Now, grandam, say, please, do, what thinkest thou?”

“Child! child! can ye not give a body peace! How can I tell the day? They will reach here when they come.”

“What a foolish grandam! Why, of course they will.” Then followed questions in rapid succession from both boys at once.

“How old is Ordulf, grandam?”

“Is he as big as Geyza?”

“Can he leap twice his length and never fail?”

“May he sleep with me and Geyza?”

“May we show him our great grandsire’s sword in the north tower?”

“And our pet turtle in the court?”

“Come, come, ye chatter boxes! Do ye wish

an answer? Ye will not get it, an ye run that wild with questions. I can tell ye more about his own great grandsire than I can of him, though I doubt not he'll be brave enough; he has the blood. But, look you! is not that a storm a-brewing in the west? I hope the Duke Bernard has made all precautions 'gainst these piercing winds and snows we have been having;" and Ryxa rose nervously to seek her son, and ask him his opinion about sending out some force to meet her cousin, and his people.

Casimir laughed at her fears; but as the storm came on in fury, later, and the darkness grew extremely dense, he held a hurried consultation with Bela and others of the court.

And soon great flaring torches were hurrying to and fro about the court-yard; and for a little while there was a confused and struggling mass of men and dogs and horses, and a great shouting of directions that, with the howling of the wind, made pandemonium itself. Our two lads, unnoticed in the flurry, found their way into the very center of the maelstrom.

One moment there would be a shout. "Look out there, son! the black will crush thee with his heels!" and one of the boys would be seized by the arms and dragged away, to find himself running

into and upsetting one of the torch-bearers; and then some jolly giant would swing the two of them upon a passing horse, and, running by their side, see that they met no harm till landed at the door.

And so before long a train of sleds and horsemen passed slowly out against the storm, and into the darkness, and the lights went out. Everyone for comfort sought the great, wood fires in the hall; and all gathered in groups about them, discussed the unusual bitterness of the winter, and the merits of the men and horses that had braved the storm this night. The boys listened to the talk with interest, and watched the sparks fly upwards as fresh logs were heaped upon the fires; until growing drowsy, they fell asleep, and were gently carried off to bed in the strong arms of the King's retainers.

Meanwhile in Saxony, many weeks before, Duke Bernard had been making ready for the long journey. The day preceding his intended start opened bright and clear; and the streets of Goslar rang with the merry shouts of children in their play at building snow-castles. In the afternoon the fun grew boisterous; ranged as Franks and Saxons, they became eager in their mimic warfare; and, in their assaults against each other's castles, the air was filled with flying snow-balls.

Ordulf, small as he was, took part with all his little might; and one time, as sole custodian of the Saxon fortress, during a sortie of his comrades, defended it well against several stragglers of the enemy. Wild with excitement, his hair tossing about his rosy cheeks, pelting the other fellows, with his ammunition (icy balls) lying ready to his hand, upon the castle-walls, he failed to notice the presence of a priest who had for some moments been watching the animated little figure with interest and pleasure. One of the assaulting party, considerably larger than Ordulf, had climbed the wall, and was in the act of jumping into the castle, when the little garrison caught up one of his feet quickly, and, by bracing against the wall, tossed him backward to the ground outside.

"Bravo! bravo!" exclaimed the delighted spectator.

It was then that Ordulf turned and saw him, and, bashfully dropping his eyes, began to poke holes in the snow with his fingers. The noise of battle grew fainter, as it rolled towards the farther castle; and the smiling priest, drawing nearer, said:

"Well done, my little son; and what's the name they give thee, little castellan?"

"Ordulf, sir."

"And thy father's name is——?"

"Why, knowest thou not?" spoke up one of the other boys, "he is the Duke's son—the great Duke Bernard."

The priest's eyes glittered strangely; but he drew Ordulf to his side, saying:

"And thou shalt be a great Duke also some day, if it please the Emperor.—Tell me, child, would'st thou not like to see the Emperor?"

"Yes, Father."

"To-morrow, if thou wilt come to the new Cathedral, we shall talk of it; for the Emperor has sent gracious invitation, to his court, for Duke Bernard and his son."

"But, Father, to-morrow we expect to start for Poland."

"Start for Poland? Ah! ha! And why for Poland?" And his brow grew clouded for a moment.

"To visit King Casimir, and Geyza, and Ladislaus."

"And who goes with thee?"

"My father, mother and ——"

Just then a deep voice broke in:

"If the child tell not all the family affairs thou seek'st to know, thou canst catechise the father."

The priest turned quickly with a nettled look,

and discovered a tall man dressed simply, but with commanding presence, whose flashing eyes and scornful lips betokened his displeasure.

Concealing his discomfiture in a low bow, the stranger said:

"Have I the honor to behold the famous Duke of Saxony?"

"My name is Bernard, and I govern Saxony," was the curt reply.

A queer smile lit up the priest's face, as with dignity he straightened up and said:

"And my name is Adalbert, provost of Halberstadt Cathedral; and I come with greeting from his most Christain Majesty, the Emperor, Henry III, of Germany, to his true and loyal vassal, Bernard, Duke of Saxony. More have I to say, but not here."

Bernard's face fell, and his tone altered, as he answered:

"Thou art welcome; I will attend thee where thou wilt."

"Further converse would be better in the chapter-house: let us go thither."

"Ordulf, thou mayst stay behind."

"Nay, let the child go with us. Come, little one;" and, taking him by the hand, Adalbert talked pleasantly of the beauty of the city, and the

strength of its defences,—so well placed on the steep hill-side,—as he led the way to the Cathedral of St. Simon and St. Jude.

Bernard was silent or gave short answers, till they reached the chapter-house. Having gained entrance, and the attendants having been dismissed, Bernard, turning abruptly upon Adalbert, demanded :

“What brought thee here, sir Provost?”

“Nay, not so fiery, gracious Duke. I but brought a summons from His Majesty that at thy convenience, soon, thou should'st attend the court at Ingleheim with the young Ordulf, that the child may learn to know his Emperor, and become acquainted with the customs of the court; for Henry would have the love of all thy house,—and, perchance, the boy may take the fancy of His Majesty, and receive a station at the court, which it will please him shortly to remove to this, his old home, Goslar. I pray thee, think well of this.”

“But I am expected, and have prepared for a visit into Poland. Tell the Emperor I will attend him upon my return.”

“Perchance the matter can be so arranged. Yes, the child can go with me unto the Emperor; and thou may'st come later. Oh! 't is a noble life thou wilt see, my child, at Ingleheim; the fine

horses of the Arab breed, great hounds, famous falcons, and gay company of brave knights and noble dames in silks and richest jewels. Thou shalt eat from golden dishes; and handsome pages shall be thy playfellows; and such music shalt thou hear as thou hast never dreamed of. Wilt thou come, my boy?"

To the bright, winning tone of Adalbert, the father listened, pale and trembling. With joyous looks the boy turned to his father and said:

"Thou wilt go with me, father, and my mother may come too?"

Bernard sadly shook his head.

"Thy father will come to see thee often," said Adalbert.

Ordulf, who had but half comprehended what was said up to this point, now began to be frightened; and, backing to his father, said:

"I do not wish to leave my father."

"Thou seest, Bernard, it were better to defer thy visit for the present. Let the Poles wait."

The red began to creep into the Duke's face; but in a low voice he said:

"Parting is as bitter one time as another,"—and then, quickly, "I will think on this to-morrow."

"As thou pleasest," said Adalbert in the

smoothes tones; "but the lad had better stay with me till then. I have much that I would show and tell him."

The great frame of the Saxon shook with anger; and, catching up the terrified boy in his arms, he turned upon the crafty, cruel priest.

"Doth the Emperor doubt my loyalty, who have been so loyal to his father, that he should claim so soon a hostage in my son? Thou—thou smooth-tongued villain-priest! Thou must wait until the morrow for thine answer."

Paler grew the priest's face, as he almost whispered:

"Thou mayest prove thy loyalty to-morrow; but the child must stay."

"Must!" and Bernard, with a laugh, strode quickly to the door and passed out, Ordulf sobbing in his arms. He had not gone many steps, before a score of Bavarian soldiers stopped his way.

"What would you?"

"We would have the child," spoke up the leader.

Bernard hesitated a moment, then said:

"At whose command?"

"Our captain's."

"And to whom wilt thou take the boy?"

"To the Provost Adalbert."

"Tell your captain that I, Bernard, Duke of Saxony, pledge my honor to deliver this child into the hands of Adalbert, and to his care, before the week's end."

CHAPTER II.

THE good natured captain, coming up just then, seemed satisfied at this; and Bernard hastened down the darkening streets toward his castle, his heart beating furiously, and his brain in a whirl. As he turned the corner of a low building, he suddenly ran up against a stalwart fellow, who, recognizing him, gasped out:

“Your Excellency, where hast thou been? The Lady Bertha is beside herself with anxious dread about her little son; for rumor states that the minions of the Franconian Emperor are here in force, and that the crafty Adalbert was seen with thee and the child. But heaven be praised that thou art safely coming home!”

“How many of the Emperor’s force, say they, are here?”

"An hundred horse are victualled at the Kais-erhaus; so saith a little maid I know there."

"This is worse than I had thought; and my castle, thinkest thou it is watched?"

"I know not; and yet methinks,—surely I saw a shadowy form vanish behind the east bastion, as I hurried forth."

"Good Gudrod, thou lovest this, my only child?"

"Indeed, my master, better than my life!"

"See, poor baby, he has cried himself to sleep. Listen, Gudrod; thou knowest the private gate down this lane? Take the child—gently—so. Here is the key. Stop not till thou reachest the hut by the spring. There is gold. The huntsman, Werner, will furnish thee with sledge and horses that he keeps in charge for me; take the great boar-hound, Dag, with thee, and robes in plenty and bread and flesh. And, Gudrod, spare not time nor horses till thou hast reached Quedlinburg. Stay there and watch well the Brocken the next day; and should'st thou see a white flag waving from the watch-tower, wait, and I will come; but should'st thou see the Saxon standard, or night come and no signal, speed thee without delay to Zerbst. There wait for Ludolph, one day only, and then on to Gnesen.—To thy care, and to God's

mercy, O my darling!" and the stern warrior pressed the child's hair with his lips. "Haste thee, Gudrod; I will guard here; shout an thou needest me ere the gate is passed."

Silently he stood there, with every nerve strained to catch the sound he dreaded. Having waited for some time, and hearing nothing, he so arranged his cloak as to convey the impression, in the dusk, that he still bore his child beneath it; he speedily reached his castle gates and entered, not failing to notice from the corner of his eye a muffled figure in the shadow of the wall.

He found his wife waiting in the hall, and in a few words disclosed to her the situation; then, calling a hurried consultation of the household, proceeded to lay out his plans before them.

"Thou, Ludolph, take the white flag and the Saxon standard, and reach the Brocken tower to-night. Repeat the signal that thou seest displayed to-morrow from the southern turret of the castle; then fly at once, with swift horse, to Zerbst. There wait for Gudrod and the child; and, taking trusty men and the best horses, make for Gnesen as swiftly, but as carefully, as thou canst. Tell Bela that into his hands and to his care I give my son, that I will follow as soon as I can safely leave. Now, haste thee, Ludolph, and the saints attend thee." So saying he dismissed this faithful vassal.

"How wilt thou make peace with the Provost, and how account to the captain of the guard for the promise thou hast given him?" said Bertha.

"Knowest thou not, my wife, that Bela's name is but another form for Adalbert, and signifies 'most nobly bright'? It is a character that belongs truly to the Hungarian Prince, but surely not to this Provost."

"Will not the troops lay hands upon thee, and compel thee to attend the Emperor at once?"

"That goes not with Henry's policy. He is a wise and gracious ruler, and while he would gladly gain a hostage from me, if by stratagem he could accomplish it, still he would not be the first to seek a quarrel with the fighting men of Saxony. He would not dare detain their Duke, for fear of civil war. If I know the ways of this great ruler, he will ever watch and seek to drain my power through the scheming hands of this would-be Delilah. Could I but get the child safely into Poland for the present, I would, with Heaven's help, maintain my loyalty, and my power as well. Now let's to bed and rest; for all my wits I'll need to-morrow."

Meanwhile, Adalbert, disappointed that he had not been able to secure his hostage, sent out guards with strict orders that none should leave the castle

without challenge and examination; and, should the child be with them, he was to be seized and brought at once to the Kaiserhaus. Ludolph was stopped, of course, but allowed to go his way.

But there was little sleep for Lady Bertha, with such a cloud upon her house, and her baby out in the wild woods of the Hartz Mountains, where bears and wolves were plenty; and, Christian though she was, her heart chilled as she remembered all the tales of ghosts and goblins that roamed about there.

When in the morning Bernard set out to see Adalbert, he made this arrangement with his wife: she was to send a page to the first turn in the road, where he could plainly see the door of the chapter-house. He was to watch carefully for Bernard's coming out, and observe his motions closely. Should the page see him at any time extend his left arm in pointing, he was to hasten back toward the castle, waving his cap as signal, which she must have watchers to observe; and then she was immediately to display the Saxon standard from the southern turret.

On his arrival at the Cathedral, he found a formidable guard about the place. He was shown into the house, and did not wait long before Adalbert appeared.

"I scarce expected thee so soon. Will Your Excellency be seated?" and he gracefully waved his hand toward a low bench in the center of the room, covered with a costly, gold-embroidered, rich red velvet robe. Bernard sat down uneasily, suspicious of so brilliant a reception, and waited till the priest should speak again.

"So early a call argues, I hope, that thou hast come to a favorable decision in the matter that so vexed thee yesterday."

"I have," was the short reply.

"Well?" (smiling pleasantly) "and thou wilt accompany the lad?"

"That depends upon the wisdom of thy actions."

"I do not understand."

"I will explain when thou hast answered certain questions."

"Say on; I'll do my best to answer them."

"If Ordulf goes with thee, doth the Emperor actually need and request my presence now?"

"I think I can safely say he doth not."

"Doth he desire my love and friendship?"

"Most certainly."

"Should I prefer to rear my child at home, and, consequently, fail to accept his gracious invi-

tation, would he look upon such action as disloyalty?"

"It would displease him sorely; and his trust in thee might grow to be no greater than thy trust in me."

"In thee! Art thou the conscience of the Emperor? The child shall never go with thee to Ingleheim."

"What? Ho, there! Send me the captain of the guard." They both kept silent till the man came in, when Adalbert addressed him: "Good Welf, did not His Excellency promise thee upon his honor that he would give the child, his son, into my keeping?"

"He did, your reverence."

"The child shall never go with me to Ingleheim? The child shall be placed in my hands and care?—Ah, yes! I see thy meaning. Thou would'st have me stay with thee. That is well, too. Yes, we will comrades, friends, and boon companions be"; and he laughed lightly; but his eyes were searchlights upon Bernard's countenance.

"And dost thou think that I would give his soul into the keeping of so gay and worldly-wise a man as thou art? I would see him dead first."

"Yet, thou hast promised so."

"I did not!"

"Thou denyest it? What trickery is this? Speak, Welf; what said he to thee yester'-night?"

"That he was Bernard, Duke of Saxony, and pledged his honor to give the child into the hands and to the care of Adalbert, before the week's end."

"Then wilt thou break thy plighted honor, Bernard?"

"Never! I will do as I have said, if God permit me."

"Thou wilt, thou wilt not, and again thou wilt; what Brocken goblin hath possession of thee now? Another promise thou hast made, an thou choose to keep it,—a promise to explain."

Bernard rose, and, turning to the soldier, said:

"There is another Adalbert—better bearer of that sacred name than is this provost—to whom I promised that my child should go; and I keep my promises."

"Quibbler!" almost hissed the priest. "Welf, a word with thee!" and Adalbert drew the captain to one side, and gave him hurried orders; then, approaching Bernard, gravely said, "As thou art bent upon it, we will stay together; thou shalt be my guest, or I will be thine."

"'Tis well," said Bernard. "Come with me and taste the hospitality that a Saxon Duke can offer."

"With pleasure."

So saying they went out together. Bernard, extending his left hand, said:

"On yonder elevation, where the linden trees are tallest, is my home."

"Surely, 'tis a spot that well adorns the stately castle. Henry anticipates a large extension to the Kaiserhaus, in order that he may have his Court well cared for here; for he strongly yearns to stay in Goslar long and often."

"The Saxons would appreciate such honor, I am sure, and I trust his kindly treatment of them will follow with his long residence among them."

Just then a horseman galloped up; and Adalbert, asking Bernard to wait a moment for him, held a close converse with the man for several minutes, then rejoined Bernard. Chancing to glance up where, in the distance, the rock-crowned but snow-covered Brocken lifted its imposing head into the clear blue sky, Adalbert made an exclamation of surprise:

"What means yonder flag flying from the tower? 'Twas not there yesterday."

"It is fit that honor should be shown the Emperor's ambassador."

"Humph! Thou art rather inconsistent in the manner of doing honor to the ambassador;" and an

incredulous smile passed over his face as they went on.

Though this forced hospitality put restraint upon all within the castle, still the wily priest, knowing well his powers, spared no exertion to make the time pass pleasantly. Handsome in person, bright, and learned in all the lore of history, brilliant in his talk of the great world, and enthusiastic on the subject of the Emperor and his devotion to the Church, he soon won the admiration of his listeners; and though Bernard still distrusted him, he could not help showing him cordial hospitality. A few days passed; and Adalbert, addressing the Lady Bertha, said:

"I have not seen thy little son since the first day of my arrival. Is he unwell?"

"Nay, sir, he is not here."

"Not here?" and his face shadowed with evident disappointment. He said nothing more upon the subject then; but, the following day there arrived a messenger from the Emperor; and Adalbert suggested to the Duke that, as the Emperor had withdrawn his summons, would he not wish to make his visit into Poland? He, Adalbert, would no longer trespass on his time, though he had enjoyed his entertainment greatly, and was loath to go.

CHAPTER III.

BERNARD lost no time in making preparations, though conscious that every movement of his household was closely watched; and, when the hour for starting came, Adalbert appeared with a force of two hundred mounted men, and declared his intention to escort them a portion of the way. It was clear to the Duke that Adalbert still hoped to seize the child, should he be waiting for his father on the way; and he dreaded that he even might intend to go all the way with them to Poland. However, he put the best face he could upon the matter, and the entire party started forth through the ponderous gates, banners flying, and trumpets sounding from the massive battlements and in answer from the cavalcade; the horses cur-

vetting and prancing along the snowy road that glistened brilliantly in the sun. It was a pretty sight to see them from above, as they wound slowly down the steep hill-side, glimpses of their bright armor and shining lances caught, here and there, through the openings in the trees that lined the road; and many a lad's heart burned to be a soldier of the Empire, as he watched them disappear.

They had not gone many leagues, when, coming to a frozen stream, they saw upon the other bank a large body of mounted soldiers, whom they recognized at once as Saxons; and in another moment their leader had crossed over and embraced the Duke. It proved to be his brother, Thietmar.

"What means this Bavarian guard, my brother?" were his first words, as he glanced suspiciously about.

"They are the body-guard of this worthy priest, the friend of the Emperor, who has taken it upon himself to accompany us thus far; but, brother," (in a low voice) "I had rather thou went with us; for I fear some mischief. How camest thou with this force so opportunely?"

"I met Ludolph, and learned enough to feel that Saxony must needs defend herself. I like not what they tell me of the Emperor. I would

rather see a Saxon dynasty upon the throne once more."

"Hush, brother! I fear the priest hath heard thee, for thy voice gained strength in anger. And, Thietmar, canst thou never learn that spoken distrust of a King, as of a friend, is base disloyalty, unless the sure evidence of guilt is in thy hand?"

Then Bernard, turning to the priest, said:

"My brother and his company will be our escort further; and, thanking thee for thy courtesy and pleasant company so far, I can spare thee further trouble."

Adalbert, laughing lightly, answered:

"Ah, Bernard! thou hast outwitted me, indeed; nor will I further burden one who, under such provocation, has shown himself a gracious host, a wise commander and a noble father. Yet I would leave thee with one last word;" and, instinctively assuming the dignity of a superior intellect, a pure and sincere light shining in his eyes, he said: "If thou lovest Saxony and wouldst see her children happy, humble thine own pride a little, but preserve their loyalty to their Emperor. Not even a Duke's pride is worth the pricelessness of peace and firm government for his people. For thy kind hospitality, and in appreciation of thy ready wit, I promise thee no further trouble for

the brave little castellan, while I have influence with the Emperor."

Then, bidding farewell to Bernard and his lady, he turned about, and, followed by his guard, soon vanished from their sight.

So gracious was this action that the Duke could not but feel some shame for the discourteous language he had used toward the priest at first; nor could he ever feel that he had not suffered in his honor, by the quibble he had used with the Bavarian captain. So, sighing for the flaws in his character, he made all haste to find his son in Poland.

When Gudrod had gotten safely to the huntsman's hut with his precious burden, he, with Werner's help, soon harnessed the horses to the sled, and with the great hound, Dag, was hurrying through the dark woods as fast as the steeds could gallop. Nothing opposed them; though, from time to time, the dark shadow of some wild animal would leap across the road in front of them and disappear in the dense brush, and more than once they heard a bear's growl; but long before daylight they were safely housed in Quedlinburg, with trusty vassals of the Duke.

With the first faint grey of light, Gudrod was out upon the Münsenberg, and looking for the peak of Brocken. Slowly out of the star-lit panorama

of blurred black and white the landscape grows. The low eastern hills are crowned with streaks of faintly-colored clouds that almost vibrate in the coming glow, and change to fleecy rose, to amber and to gold. Out of the gloomy forest close at hand the tall pines spring erect to life, and in their dark, green armor, stand like sentinels to challenge the advancing day. Here and there in the depths, the golden-brown birch-tree presents its shining face to view, as though 'twere curling out of sleep. Unnoticed and like magic, the isolated fir-trees on the hill-top have dropped long, endless shadows on the soft, white snow. A hush,—a gentle breathing of the air, that makes all nature bow in prayer,—and, in the east, a burst of glory! The tall domes and battlements, here in Quedlinburg and in far-off Halberstadt, are beautifully bright; and the sun's rays burn upon the castle-walls of Regenstein and glisten on the wave-like forest-covering of the Hartz. A flash of light darts through the trees that have shadowed the great Rosstrappe, as it stands, a dark and gloomy giant, guarding the valley of the Bode; and in an instant its grey-green, rugged, granite face is full of diamonds.

Slowly and reluctantly the mist rises and rolls up the mountain heights, lifted by the myriad

golden levers of the sun. Will it never reach the top? Gudrod's eager eyes are bent in anxious expectation. The mist grows thin in places; and, for a moment, suspended in the air like a picture, he sees, or seems to see, the Blocksberg tower;—and then 'tis gone; when at a breath the misty veil is rent and vanishes; and behold! the Brocken, like a great white throne, towers up to heaven!

At intervals, for his eyes are blinded by the glare, he looks up to the watch-tower. At last he catches the fluttering signal. Is it white or not? A breeze stretches it out southeast to its full length, and he sees the Saxon banner that so many times has floated there in triumph. Now, alas! it means defeat. Almost sobbing at the thought, and terrified with the dread of some calamity to his noble lord, his limbs tremble so he can hardly descend the hill. Yet, knowing his duty, he hastens to perform it.

Another long and lonely ride brings them to Zerbst by nightfall, and there the two patient comrades, man and boy, wait through the long night and day, keeping up heart as well as they can, and longing for the arrival of Ludolph.

"See, Gudrod, see! Yonder he comes! Ah, now we shall have news of father!"

"Yes, and God grant 'tis good news."

Ludolph, as soon as he drew near, sprang from his panting horse and caught the boy up in his arms.

"Bless thee, child! but I am glad to see thee safe and well!"

"Tell us of the Duke,"—"What of my father?" said the others in a breath.

"That I can hardly say, and yet I know that none dare touch a hair of the noble Saxon, and hope to live. Oh! but his brother, Thietmar, burned with anger when I told him! For I met him this noon coming from the Bodethal, with a deer across his back, and he swore that three days should not pass before he would enter the Breiten-thor of Goslar with an army at his back; and, if the provost had done harm to his brother, that he would bring him, bound to the Rosstrappe, and hurl him to the rocks below. I fear the passion of thine uncle will some day bring him into trouble; but thy father is a man who stands too far above his passions, and is too wise to bring upon himself any harm. But we must not tarry here; we have a long and dangerous journey before us, and must make many careful preparations."

It was somewhat difficult, in the little village, to find men who could leave their families for the long trip to Gnesen; but two were found at last;

and, having packed the sledges well with robes and provisions, axes, javelins and bows, the little party started out the next morning in gay spirits after all; for there was much of interest in looking forward to the new scenes and people they would find in Poland; and King Casimir had promised great doings at the Easter festival. They took the forest trails from town to town, traveling by day; and when night came and they were still out on the road, great fires were made at each end of their camping place, and trees were felled at the side, making a rude, temporary fortification, within which the horses were corralled and the sledges placed; while one or more of the men acted as sentinels, exchanging with each other through the night.

After many days of such travel they arrived at Posen on the Warta. Here the two men, whom they had brought with them from Zerbst, desired to stay and rest; and Ludolph, being assured that he could reach Gnesen before another night, decided to go on without them. He was told to follow a small river, the Głowna, until he reached a lake, which was about six miles directly west of Gnesen. A good start was made in the morning upon the frozen surface of the stream; Gudrod and his charge in one of the sledges, and Ludolph on

his horse. Ordulf could scarce contain himself with excitement as they flew along upon the ice, for he longed to meet the little sons of Bela, about whom he had heard so much; and many a laugh and shout came from the delighted boy, as one or other of the party had to dodge low-hanging branches under which they swept unexpectedly, as they rounded short curves in the winding course of the stream.

They had accomplished perhaps more than half the distance when the obstructions, such as drift-wood and fallen trees, over which they had to lift or push the sledge, became so numerous as to compel them finally to abandon the sledge altogether; and, taking what they could upon the horses, they made progress wherever it was easiest to go, first along the bed of the river, then on its banks. As the day grew longer, temptation came to make short cuts to avoid the winding course of the stream. This was dangerous, for the river was their only guide, and the forest growth was low and dense; added to this the clouds were gathering ominously heavy in the west, and a fine driving snow began to fall. Suddenly Ludolph stopped.

“Gudrod, where is the river?”

“Is it not yonder?”

“I know not; let us see.”

They tried first one way, then another, but could find it nowhere. The driving snow and growing darkness soon made it impossible to see far, and the cold wind began to chill them. Perplexed, they knew not where to turn. Then from the distance came a long, low sound that startled Gudrod and made him pale, and hug the boy, who sat in front of him, closer to his breast.

"What is that sound, like music, Gudrod?"

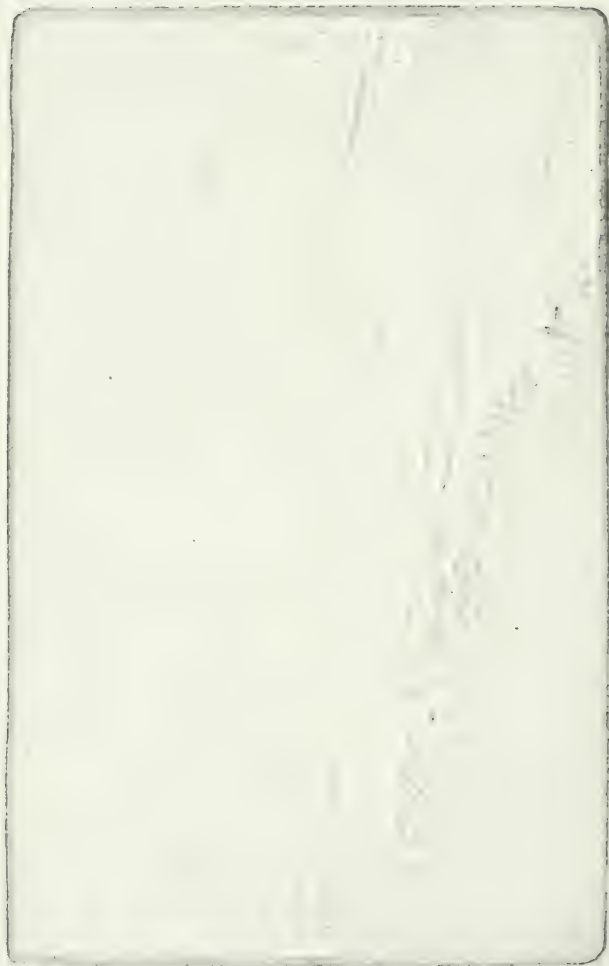
Gudrod did not answer, but shouted to Ludolph, "Hear you that?"

"Which way is it?" said Ludolph, coming up; and they bent their ears to listen.

The wind roared through the tree-tops, and flapped their cloaks, and tossed the horses' manes and tails about; yet clear came the swelling wolf-call. Quickly Gudrod's head came up, and stretching one hand to the left behind him, he grasped the bridle with the other and shouted, "On for your life;" and digging his heels into his horse's flanks, he urged him forward. Loud and louder grew the sound, and faster flew the horses in their terror, when suddenly the woods came to an end, and the frozen lake appeared, spread out before them. Down they dashed and out upon its snow-covered surface, inspired anew with hope, for now their lost feeling vanished. But soon anxious

glances cast behind discovered scores of black forms bounding over the white snow and gaining every moment. Ludolph shouted, "Keep courage and keep on;" then, dropping behind, halted, and, drawing his bow, let fly an arrow at the foremost, who fell rolling in the snow. The pack stopped, snarling and tusselling in a bunch together, for a few moments only, and then on again to chase the flying Ludolph. Again and again he stopped them the same way; and then his arrows were all gone.

Gudrod's horse, being more heavily loaded, had not gained so very much by these delays, and soon Ludolph was up with him, and the howling pack were close behind. Indeed, one of them was even up beside them, his eyes glaring and his red tongue hanging out, kept off for a few possible moments longer by the savage growls of the great hound, Dag, who kept close beside the horse that Gudrod rode, when—what was that? It sounded like a bugle-call. Ah! surely, there it was again. On, Gudrod! with thy precious charge, so bravely quiet. Courage, noble Ludolph! And, driven by the wind, the snow, the howling terror closing on them, they dashed breathless into the very midst of a sturdy band of hounds and horsemen. Then there was a struggle betwixt the fierce dogs and the



"One of them was even up beside them, his eyes glaring and his red tongue banding out." Page 40.

bewildered wolves, who had been too eager in the chase to take alarm.

Ludolph, when he had gained his breath, begged to know who his timely deliverers were.

"First, tell us who thou art and whom thou seekest," said the leader, a tall, broad-shouldered giant of a man.

"My name is Ludolph, and this, my comrade, Gudrod. We are henchmen of our lord, the Duke of Saxony, and we seek the King of Poland, and the Hungarian Bela."

"Ah! well met, indeed, for I am Bela, and anxiously have I awaited Bernard's coming; and, fearing some evil from this storm, set out to meet him. But where are he and his?"

Here Gudrod stepped forward, having dismounted and holding Ordulf by the hand.

"Gracious Prince, I would present to thee my charge, Bernard's only son, as he commanded me."

Bela, reaching down, caught up the boy into his strong arms and said:

"Right glad am I to see thee, child. But how is this? What does it mean?"

It did not take long for Ludolph to tell all about their troubles in Goslar; and turning back toward Gnesen they discussed the matter on the way.

CHAPTER IV.

THE wind had gone down and all was still, both within and without the palace walls at Gnesen, when Geyza's mother, sleeping lightly, for she was restless with anxiety, fancied she heard a bugle-note far, far away. Springing from her couch beside the children, she groped her way to the small window in their room which opened to the west, and peered out into the darkness; again she heard the note, and knew it for her husband's. Quickly she found her mother, Ryxa, and soon the awakened warders had the hall fires ablaze. The call echoed and reëchoed at the gates; and then, through the portals of the palace thronged the tired men, Bela carrying the sleeping Ordulf carefully before him in a huge black bear-skin. He laid him down before one of the fires, and his wife, lis-

"Thinkest thou that is Ordulf, brother?" whispered Ladislaus.

"It may be; but where is the noble Bernard, who, father said, was so tall?"

"There, there, Geyza! with the bright-red girdle!" and he pointed to where Ludolph was standing, his drinking-horn raised high, in the act of doing honor to some toast.

"Silly boy, he is no taller than the others; nor would the Duke mix so with the common men."

"But seest thou not his long yellow hair?"

"Aye, that is common with the Saxons; he must be some vassal in attendance; look how great the muscles of his arms are! And, Ladis, seest thou that other stranger with a leathern jerkin? Mark his rugged face and heavy eye-brows."

"What long arms he has!"

"And how quiet he doth seem in all the merri-ment. Ladis, I do believe he is a Dane."

In their interest the boys had grown bolder, and as they leaned further out into the fire-light, looking for others of the expected company, Bela, glancing up, discovered them.

"Ah! you little rogues!"

Startled by the voice, and fearing that they had been spying where they were not-wanted, they turned and scampered. Their little bare feet

tening to what he told her about the rescue, bent curiously over the child.

How beautiful he was, as he lay there! His clasped hands under his head; his golden hair spread out on the soft black fur; his little legs curled up beneath him; long brown lashes resting on his rosy cheeks; and lips parted in a smile, as some fairy dream delighted him; and, over all, the flickering fire-light. Something—it may have been the noisy voices of the men as they laughed and feasted—waked him, and, as his eyes slowly opened, they met the rapt gaze of the gentle lady, and he murmured, “Mother.”

Tears filled her eyes, as, springing forward, she caught him to her heart and kissed his brow, his hair, his cheeks.

“Bless thee, bless thee! little darling;” while he sobbed, “I thought thou wast my mother.”

“And I will be thy mother till she comes herself, which, dear child, I hope will not be long, for I doubt not she doth yearn to see thee also.”

While they were talking, two little half-clad figures had stolen down the stairway, and, huddled together, were crouching on the steps, and with wide-open eyes were gazing at the scene, uncertain whether it was their right to join the fire-side group or not.

scurrying up the steps, and their excited laughter drew everyone's attention. Bela called after them several times:

"Come back! Come hither! Ye have naught to fear."

And soon Geyza appeared, sheepishly creeping down with Ladis close behind and clinging to him, peeping out, first one side, then the other, and his finger in his mouth.

"Come and make acquaintance with your new playfellow. My! but your fierce antics must have frightened him." And Bela smiled pleasantly as he led them forward.

"Here, Ordulf, are my little sons."

The children stood gazing curiously at each other, shy and speechless, till the mother came to their relief.

"Come sit ye down by me."

And, as they nestled by her side, she succeeded in getting Ordulf to relate the story of his adventures. And so before long, like three brothers, they were snuggled all together on one couch, and fast asleep.

The days came and went, and brought with them fun and frolic; brought the Duke Bernard and his wife; brought to Ordulf a little baby-sister, who, with great ceremony, was christened

Gertrude at the Posen Cathedral; brought melting snows and direful floods, causing loss of many cattle on the low pasture-lands, and serious distress among the poor peasants.

"O, mother! what do you think?" said Geyza one day; "there is a man in the court who just came from Dantzic. He's all ragged, and hungry as a bear; and he says that he only escaped with his life from the Pagans, who were going to kill him because he was a Christian."

"And, mother," struck in Ladislaus, "he said he had not had anything to eat for three weeks."

"Bah! Ladis, thou meanst three days; a man could not live three weeks without eating; could he, mother?"

"Our Saviour did," said Ladis.

"Yes, darling, but I doubt if a man could."

"Could not St. Adalbert? the one that father was named for?"

"Oh! tell us about St. Adalbert, mother; please do!" said Geyza. "Come, Ordulf!" and the children clustered around her.

She began:

"It was near this same Dantzic that the holy man died."

"Did he love the men who killed him, mother?" Ladis whispered.

"Yes, dear, I think he did; but he loved his Saviour so that he yearned to bring to that Saviour all he could, for he knew how precious to the blessed Jesus were these blind souls who knew Him not. Adalbert left all who loved and honored him; all who so eagerly sought his counsel; and, defended only by his faith, with one or two attendants, tramped wearily, day after day, among a fierce and contemptuous people, endeavoring, with all his skill and patience, to explain the Saviour's love to these poor ignorants. All listened, some believed, and some derided. Bravely he struggled on from place to place, poorly housed and fed, often brutally treated, he never hesitated to teach the truth.

"Finally, with two faithful monks, he found his way to a place near Fischhausen, and entering a beautiful grove of great oak trees, he and his companions, worn out, dropped asleep and dreamed of going home and being greeted by loving and excited friends, when they were awakened by loud shouts; and savages glared at them; and rough hands pushed and shoved their poor, weak frames about. The two monks were forced beyond the limits of the grove, but Adalbert, perceiving the strange dress of the men, and skilled in interpreting their gestures, must have known that this was

some Pagan circle devoted to the worship of their gods, and that these savage creatures were very devil's ministers. Indignant and full of resentful zeal and courage, he will not give place to the devil, but fiercely struggles to assert his right to preach God's message even there.

"Grand old missionary! praying, to the last, that God will send him the gift of tongues (he did not know the language of these Prussians) to bring salvation to these people, whose spears are entering his body in seven places. And God answers him; for, dying with the words, 'Jesus, receive me Thou,' he preaches in that tongue which all peoples and all times can best understand, and falls, his arms stretched out, a dying but an ever-living crucifix, a christening mark upon the land.

"Terrified, the monks fled back and told the tale to your great-grandsire, Boleslaus. He sent ambassadors to that heathen land, and bargained to obtain the body of the missionary, finally agreeing to pay its weight in gold. And behold, a miracle! When it was placed in the scales, 'twas light as so many feathers, and took very little gold, indeed. This was the first of many, many miracles that the Saint's body has performed. It lies now enshrined in Gnesen; and, as you know, boys, pilgrims constantly seek purification by the sight

and touch of it. Even Otto III. of Germany was here in that dreaded year, 1000. And but a year ago all Poland mourned because they thought the body had been taken from us by the Bohemians. And yet, another miracle! The robbers were blinded in their search, and in error took some other body instead. But—best of all miracles—the spirit of the nation was strengthened and united, and brought us all together to this, our dear home once more.”

She and her little audience for some time kept thoughtful silence, when Ladislaus reverently asked:

“May we go and see the Saint, mother?”

“Yes, dear, I think you may; we will ask your Uncle Casimir if we may not go to-morrow.”

It was a beautiful and awe-inspiring ceremony to the lads—their visit to the shrine of St. Adalbert. Laid out upon an elaborate stone tomb at the foot of the altar, was the embalmed body, dressed in the bishop’s robes, with mitred head and covered face, and hands, holding the crosier, crossed upon his breast; while rows of priests, kneeling at his head and feet, prayed and chanted; the whole scene brilliant in the light of many candles. Pilgrims of all ages and conditions approached with bared feet, and knelt, and

groaned, and prayed, and went their way again. Ordulf and Geyza hung back somewhat, being overawed; but Ladislaus, thinking of nothing save the purity and unselfishness of the living man, drew very near to him, and knelt there long.

When they came out into the warm light of day Ordulf said:

“Wast not afraid of that dead body?”

With wondering eyes Ladis answered:

“No, I thought not of that at all.”

“Of what was my child thinking?” said the fond mother to him in a whisper.

He drew closer to her, and in a bashful voice replied:

“I thought that I would try—that I would try, dear mother, to be as pure and holy, if I could; and I prayed to God to help me.”

These two walked on the rest of the way in silence, hand in hand, full of their own thoughts.

CHAPTER V.

THOU shalt be the King, Geyza, and I will be the Archbishop; and what shall Ladis be?"

"Oh, I'll be the people." And they all laughed merrily.

"What are the children up to now?" said Ordulf's mother, coming in.

"Why, mother, we are playing Coronation Day; and wilt thou help us? Please, do, mother. This dais is to be the throne, and we want something fine to cover it; may we not have thy purple robe? I know where it is; I'll fetch it; we will do no harm to it, dear mother; say I may get it, please do." And the little, excited boy hardly waited for her consent, ere he dashed away for it.

Geyza's mother, coming in, lent her aid to the

proper dressing for their play, making from leather a goodly crown, and gilding it. Geyza, handy with his tools, contrived a sceptre and Archbishop's staff. Then, with much affectation of solemnity, after blowing of trumpets by Ladis and the lady mothers, Geyza advanced toward the throne, where Ordulf stood, and, kneeling, received the crown upon his head, and ointment, which Ordulf had confiscated from his mother's chamber,—which much surprised her, as it was a costly luxury to pour out so freely, yet she spared reproof at this time, fearing to spoil the sport. Then Ladis blew the trumpet again and again, and shouted long and loud, taking his part of the people beautifully, so his mother said. Then suddenly bethinking himself of what his father had once told him, he bared his arm and, seizing a knife, called out to the others, "Come! let us seal allegiance;" and, had it not been that his mother, springing to him, caught the knife, he, in his thoughtless enthusiasm, would have hurt himself, perhaps seriously.

Ordulf, frightened and perplexed, cried out:

"What doth he mean?"

And Ladis sobered down; and, blushing for shame that he had brought such trouble on their game, hid his face; while Geyza said:

"It was an old custom of our Hungarian ancestors, when any chieftain was chosen Duke, that allegiance should be sealed by drinking each of the blood of all, obtained by cutting open the veins of their arms."

"Aye! a barbarous custom!"

It was Casimir who said this; he had just come in, in time to hear what Geyza said—"a barbarous custom! The Hungarians are barbarians! savages!"

Little Geyza's cheeks grew scarlet, and his eyes flashed.

"It is not true, Uncle Casimir, and it is unkind in thee to speak thus of my father's countrymen. Callest thou the great King Stephen barbarous, or my noble father?" The child could hardly keep from crying, so angry was he.

"Peace, little nephew! Thus far I am, indeed, untrue, for your father is most certainly a noble, Christian knight and gentleman; neither was there any of the savage in the great King Stephen, and yet he left naught of his gentleness to his country when he died." (He was speaking to the ladies now, rather than to Geyza.) "For, look you, what bloody feud exists now in his state! Venetian pride and craft, like a whipped tiger, crouches low in Germany, waiting for a chance to

spring; while Aba, like a wild boar, snorts defiance at the Emperor; and, expelling the industrious Germans, invites war's devastation from this powerful neighbor. All this has made, and will still make, sad history in Hungary. This is a legacy from the great King to his beloved country. Yes, he was great, and ruled the country well, and won high place for her among the nations; so other men are great, forsooth, within a span that reaches no further than their own eyes can see, their own iron arms can stretch. Few, indeed, are they who build foundations that last for ages; giants, so strong that, what they place, their successors cannot move. Such a one was Charlemagne, and England's Alfred was another."

"And dost thou think that Samuel Aba and the Venetian Peter are playing with the foundation-stones that King Stephen hath laid down?"—It was the deep and quiet voice of Bela, who had entered in time to hear the last of Casimir's speech.—"Nay, brother, they but throw the dust about, upon the top; be ye sure, on those same deep foundations will my great country live and thrive, offering to every earnest, energetic statesman a chance to lay his own peculiar stone securely."

Geyza had never before heard much of the political condition of Hungary. His father had

thought it best to tell him only of the bright and happy times of his country, content to let him learn its sorrows, as he grew older. So this sober converse of his elders was truly a sad revelation to him, and he wandered off by himself, his little heart full of sorrow for that beautiful land that his father loved so dearly; and he longed to do something to help. The fun and frolic of the day seemed long ago, and as though some other boy, and not himself, had taken part in it. Why could he not go to Hungary even now, and grow up with, and for, the people, his father's own countrymen? Some day even he might be one of those earnest men who, his father said, might have a chance to build up Hungary.

"Where hast thou been all this while?" and Ladislaus ran gayly up to Geyza; then, noticing a peculiar look in his face, said anxiously, "Why art thou so sober, brother; is aught amiss?"

"O Ladislaus! Ladislaus! I can but see the cruel wars in Hungary, the dead and dying people. I wish—Oh! I wish I could go to Hungary! I could help some, I am sure. I could fetch and carry; for I am large and strong for my age, so mother says. I could bind up wounds, for Grandam Ryxa has shown me how, often. Oh!

I could do much to help. I shall ask father if I may go."

"And I shall go with thee, for I can help, too."

"Eye! dear little brother, what could'st thou do?"

"Why, I could—I could pray, dear brother."

"Ah! but mother could not spare us both; and thou art too little; and thou could'st pray here as well. No, Ladis, thou canst not go."

Ladis tried to say more; but his lips trembled and turned up; his eyes filled with tears; and, crying and sobbing, he turned and ran into a corner of the porch where they had been talking. This was too much for Geyza; and he knelt down beside him, put his arms about him, and told him not to mind, for he loved him and was sorry he had hurt his feelings.

"Even if thou art a little boy now, thou wilt be a big boy soon. I was a little boy, too, not long ago; and, Ladis, if thou would'st not have me leave thee, I might wait another year or so, till thou art larger grown; then will we go together."

At this, Ladis brightened up; and the two boys started off to find Ordulf, their arms twined about each other.

All of this scene had been witnessed by Bela, who was below them in the garden at the time, al-

though unnoticed by them. As he heard the brave, earnest words they uttered, his heart swelled with pride in them one moment, and the next sank, as he felt humbled to the dust. He! a great, strong man! idling here in Poland, far from the country that he loved and that needed help so sorely; and these little children, babies almost, planning to go to its relief! His breast heaved in the struggle of his emotions, and his temples throbbed. Like a caged lion he turned one way and then another, caught the stone gate-posts in his arms, and, like a Sampson, strained and bowed between them. Oh, that he could break the barriers down that barred him from his country!

CHAPTER VI.

THE next day Geyza found his father in his chamber, alone; and being full of his new hopes and plans, at once started the subject. After telling what his thoughts had been and what his wishes were, he said:

“Father, may I have thy permission to make Hungary my country some day before long?” He had climbed into his father’s lap; and Bela had listened attentively to what he said.

“And would’st thou leave thy father and thy mother who so dearly love thee, to say nothing of thy little brother?”

“But Ladis would go with me; and——” a strange look, pleased and yet surprised, as though, for the first time, he had seen a thought that had been looking at him all his life——“why canst not

thou go with us? Hungary is thy country; and no one is so powerful as thou."

His voice grew faint as he saw the agony in his father's face, and, frightened, he would have fallen from his lap, but Bela caught his two hands in his own, and, holding him spell-bound with his deep, sad eyes, he said:

"My brave son, canst thou bear to know the sorrow of thy father? Listen.

"My grand-father, Prince Michael, King Stephen's eldest uncle, made his home upon the Sajo, which rises among the foot-hills of the Carpathians, and is one of the streams that help to make the river Theiss. It was there my father, Ladislaus (it was for him I named thy brother), lived and reared his little family. Michael was a proud and powerful man; and when my elder brother, Andrew, and I were young boys, he told us many a tale of the might and prowess of his father, Duke Toxun. As his brother, Geyza (thy great uncle for whom thou wast named, and who was Duke of Hungary), died, leaving only one son, who had been christened Stephen, he ever felt the nearness of our branch to the throne, and imbued us boys with the dignity that would befit a station we might some day occupy. As my brother Andrew was the elder, I thought but little of such

a chance for myself; but he laid great store by it, and grew up with the feeling that such must be his fate; particularly, as King Stephen had but one son, and he not strong.

“Ten years ago—Oh! what a long ten years!—my father died; my grand-father had died some time before. Andrew, prouder than ever in his position as head of our house, by his words and actions inspired his followers with the same feeling of his near claim to the throne; when an event, great in its far-reaching results, took place.

“Emeric, son of King Stephen, in whom that aged monarch had placed all his heart’s desires in this world, sickened and died. The king, bereft and stupefied, seemed to lose all hold upon the world, its pleasures and even its duties. His wife, Gisela, with the prestige of his great name, and with the help of those nearest to her—or, I should rather say, controlled by their scheming—piloted the affairs of state as best she could during the remaining years of his life. Andrew, acting under the advice of the wisest of our friends, sought the court as soon after Emeric’s death as he could with propriety, and placed himself before the King, as one who would do all that he could to help him; and craved his fatherly interest for himself, as the one who could be best named as his successor.

“King Stephen received him kindly; and, having called a Diet, he asked the wise counsellors to his bedside—for he was stricken low by his great sorrow—and presented Andrew to them, as the one of Arpad’s race who most deserved election as their king when he should die; and with solemn form declared it his wish and desire that Andrew should succeed him.

“I had accompanied my brother to Stuhlweissenburg; and I witnessed this event, and saw the triumphant look of pride he wore, and noticed also the dark scowl upon the features of one little man, whose sleek, black hair curled low upon his shoulders. He stood with legs spread wide apart and arms folded, a jaunty black velvet cap upon his head, and a rich cloak thrown carelessly upon one shoulder, and caught with a twisted golden chain of cunning pattern. His fingers played nervously, the while, with his jewelled sword-hilt; and when he left the chamber, he passed close by me; and his whispers to the Queen, who walked beside him, hissed between his teeth. When afterwards I described him to my brother, he told me that he was the Venetian Peter, whose father was the Doge of Venice, and whose mother was sister to King Stephen; and he muttered, ‘I fear me he means mischief.’

“For many days we tarried in the royal city, making acquaintance with the people of the court. There we met men from all parts of the world—Venice, Rome, Spain, France, and Germany; but of all I met, the one who most attracted me had a sad history. His name was Edward, and his country, England. Many years before, he with his brother, mere baby orphans, had been taken from their country. His father, Edmund, surnamed Ironsides, who was King of England, had been foully murdered; and the great Canute had sent them into Norway to be killed. Their custodians, less cruel than their master, let them escape to Hungary; and here the kind King Stephen had reared them as his own.

“Edward was very, very sad; for, though his life had been a peaceful one, the shadow of the great wrong done his father and himself and brother, who had died young, made the sense of exile very keen. His bearing was of gentle dignity; and I could not help loving and admiring him; and I wondered how it would seem to be an exile. Oh! little did I think then that I should know too soon the feeling.

“Every day or two Andrew sought audience of the King; but after the dispersion of the Diet, save the first time, he never saw him; for there

was always some pretext that stopped the way. Each time he marked that the manner of the Queen and her household grew colder towards him. Once, when he had waited long in the ante-chamber, she and Peter, coming out from the presence of the King, passed him by and not so much as looked at him. Peter shrugged his shoulders and said, so loud that every one could hear him:

“‘Strange that these savages should wait so long and patiently for crumbs! Methinks their own forests would be more congenial!’

“The hot blood sprang to Andrew’s face; and, clutching the little dark man by the arms, he detained him roughly, saying, ‘Methinks these slimy serpents of the sea may some day wish that they had never crawled so far from their native elements;’ and, ere the frightened man could gather courage to reply, my brother strode, indignant, from the room, calling me to follow. As I went out, glancing back, I saw a fearful and a troubled look in the Queen’s face; but the black eyes of Peter shone with an evil, vengeful glare.

“The next day, came from the mountains of Transylvania, a noble, Vatha by name, offspring of that Duke Gyula who, while battling for the Pagan religion, was so signally defeated by King Stephen thirty years before. Vatha was a strange,

fierce character, who passed most of his life in the woods. He had been a frequent visitor at our home and knew us well; but I had heard my father often say warningly, 'Beware of Vatha, I fear he worships the idols of his fathers secretly.' He had brought with him a rough band of followers, who were much gazed at in the town.

"Late in the evening, searching for my brother, I found him talking earnestly with Vatha in the extensive gardens of our lodgings. As I came up to them, Andrew said, 'I will consult my brother;' and with a nervous, eager manner rose to meet me.

" 'Bela, thou knowest how the Queen and her court receive me? Also thou knowest the ambition of Peter for the throne? Much have I heard of his boastings that none other than himself will wear the crown when Stephen dies. Any moment the Queen and her counsellors may win a revocation of his will as regards my succession, and some other, such as Peter, receive his sanction. Nay, I heard this very morning that summons had been issued for the assembly of the magnates of the realm; and the upstart action of this Peter yesterday augurs some newer hopes on his part. Our wise friend, Vatha here, has heard as much himself, and even now was urging certain actions.

Say on, Vatha, let my brother hear thy reasoning. I would rather that thy thoughts were fathered by thyself.'

"Thy great-grand sire, Toxun, the Conqueror, feared not to utter what his heart felt.'

"Yes, Vatha, but I know not yet that my heart beats in harmony with thy suggestions.'

"Thinkest thou 'twould beat in better tune with Peter's lordly wishes? Aye, believe me! 'twill not beat long, when he is King of Hungary; unless that day find thee with an army at thy back.'

"Another once crowned King, and my army would be small indeed.'

"Then wait not! The time is ripe! The great nobles of the country have witnessed King Stephen's declaration of thy fitness for the throne; and he has solemnly stated that such was his desire. Now lies he, mind enfeebled, pliant in the hands of foreign, popish powers. Why standest thou so faint-hearted, and seest thy beloved country stolen from thee and sold! bound! enslaved! to the proud pope-loving Emperor of Germany? For so it will be, if thou give the German-born Gisela and the Italian puppet many hours to work their schemes.'

"What would'st thou?" said Andrew; and I

felt his eyes bent anxiously on mine, while I listened breathlessly, fearing the wild counsel of this mountaineer.

"Cautiously Vatha looked about him; and then, drawing nearer to us, said, 'The King!—he is no longer King; he lies there careless and oblivious of the needs of Hungary. His heart longs for the angel, Death, to take him to his son. Surely 't were a blessing to the old, sorrowing man to grant him his heart's desire.'

"My heart stopped beating; and I felt as cold as ice. Trembling, I clutched my brother and found utterance. 'What means he? This is treason! O my brother, do not listen longer!'

"'Hush, Bela!'

"Vatha continued: 'Treason? Is it treason to protect the faithful people of one's country who have pledged their loyalty to the house of Arpad, and can expect protection from them only? Is it treason for the acknowledged King-expectant to save Hungary from slavery to Venice, and from the iron heel of Germany, that has longed and waited years to crush this conquering nation? Listen not now to wise counsel, and later thou shalt have to listen to the meanings of thy countrymen.'

"Feeling the wrong that lurked in his impas-

sioned arguments, yet unable to find reasons to combat them, and terrified lest his eloquence should drown my sense of right and make me party to some guilty action, I clapped my hands upon my ears and fled. I had taken but a few steps, when I stumbled over the prostrate form of a man who was in hiding near. I recovered myself and cried out; but he had darted through the shrubbery and scaled the wall, before Andrew and Vatha reached me; not, however, so quickly but I had recognized the dark hair and slight figure of the Venetian Peter. When I told the others who I thought it was, Vatha burst forth, 'The die is cast! There is but one moment for success! My men are close at hand, well mounted; and the captain of the King's guard is one with us. A kingdom for thyself and Hungary still free; or captivity, exile, or dishonored death awaits ye both, and misery for thy country!'

"For an instant Andrew hesitated; and I found breath to whisper, 'O Andrew! follow not the devil; remember thy great namesake, St. Andrew; follow only Christ!'

"A shudder passed through him; and he almost shouted, 'Nay, Vatha! I will be no regicide!'

"Vatha sprang like a tiger to the top of the garden wall, gave a shrill whistle; and his troop

came galloping up. He turned fiercely to us, crying out, 'It is too late! my own life is forfeit else! When I have won thy kingdom for thee, thou wilt think differently.' The next moment he was gone.

"My first thought was to save the King. My fleet Arab steed, a present to me from a Greek friend of my grand-father, was ready saddled at a gate not far away; for I had planned an evening ride with Andrew. I lost not a moment in getting to him; and, once on his back and out upon a private lane, a short cut to the palace, I put spurs and flew. I waited not to think what I should say; but when I reached the palace I sprang from my horse and up the steps; there I found the English Edward; and, strangely faint and out of breath, I could but say, 'The King! the King! treason! watch well—let no one in! and—change the traitor-captain of the guard!'

"I must have fainted then; for all was black, until I found myself in a strange room with iron bars across the narrow windows; and, groping to the doors, found them locked. All that night long I paced my little cell, sleepless and distracted. Had the King been murdered? Would the evidence of Peter criminate my brother and myself? What would be our fate—death, captivity or exile? Would the morrow never come? In all this time

of misery there was one comfort—my brother had not yielded to the devil; and I had done my duty to my King. Remember all thy life long, my little son—‘Seek first, the honor of thy country, then its advantage; and God will give thee glory.’

“At last, when the grey light began to enter at my window, I lost myself in sleep; and when I woke again, the English Edward stood bending over me. From him I learned that I had been just in time. He himself had secured the traitor-captain’s post, and barred out the fierce mountaineers; who, discomfited at the failure of their plans, had vanished; all but one, who had forced his way past every barrier and gained the King’s chamber. But there he met what he had not expected; he met a grand, heroic King; for Stephen, aroused by the tumult, had raised himself upon his couch; the red glare of the on-coming torches of the guard shone on him as he sat there, facing the assassin, with calm, majestic mien; his powerful eyes fixed upon the man, with such kingly grandeur in their depths, that his arms fell powerless; and, kneeling at Stephen’s feet, he besought forgiveness. This the King granted, commanding the guard, who came crowding in, to let this man go free. And Vatha—for it was he—with head hung low in shame, passed out and disappeared.

"'Twas then, when all danger was over—this had taken but a very little time—that Peter came running up the street, shouting wildly and strangely mixing matters in his fright, 'Treason! treason! guard the traitors! seize the palace! Bela! Andrew! the King! Holy Saints! don't let any of them get away!' and, stumbling up the steps, caught his sword between his legs and fell prostrate, cursing and swearing at the soldiers who stood laughing at his mishap. Catching sight of me, where I lay insensible, he ordered his servants, who were now at hand, to take me to the room where Edward found me; nor had the inhuman little creature even waited to see if I revived; but, locking me in, hastened to the Queen, and placed the blackest construction on my brother's actions and on mine, namely, that we had plotted the King's death.

"This much Edward told me; and I saw clearly that he believed in my loyalty; and I freely told him all that had occurred in the garden. Through him—kind friend—I gained an audience with the King, who also believed me, and commanded that I be set at liberty, which was done. Soon after, however, Edward came to say that the Queen and Peter, fearing for the results if Andrew or myself remained at liberty in

Hungary, had gained permission to re-arrest us. The people also had been so wrought up by their horror of the attempted deed, and by Peter's machinations, that to remain longer in Stuhlweissenburg was unsafe. Hurriedly calling our followers together, Andrew and myself made preparations for immediate flight. Edward watched us sadly. The moment for parting came; and, as we embraced each other, he said, 'We are brothers in affliction; I foresee your safety, only in voluntary exile; will either of us ever reach the haven where we would be?'

"'God only knows!' I answered. 'Farewell, dear Edward;' and, as our horses, feeling the spurs, dashed forward, I turned and waved my hand to the lone figure; and after me he called, 'When thy country needs thee, and will receive thee, I will send thee word.'

"For forty-eight hours we travelled, giving only such rest as our horses needed; and, worn out, reached our home in the Sajo valley late at night. The next day was passed in resting; and just at sunset, came a flying horseman bearing tidings that a strong body of the King's troopers were close at hand, bent upon our capture. Hastily gathering what treasures, food and clothing, could be carried easily upon horseback, and with a few

hardy retainers, we stole out through the woods, and found our way to the great rocky caverns near us, hoping in their depths to elude pursuit. Early in the morning I climbed the heights above our place of refuge, and watched long to see what signs I could of the soldiers.

"How beautiful the little valley looked that day! Here and there I caught the silvery glimmer of the river through the dense foliage of the trees; and bright shone the walls of our dear home in the sunlight. Great, white, billowy clouds floated majestically in the deep blue above, making dark, green lakes of shadows slowly drifting far below. All was so still and peaceful, that I forgot that any evil could exist in such a paradise."

Here Bela paused a moment; and Geyza murmured:

"Father, I wish that I might some time see it, just as thou didst."

"God grant thou mayest, my child. But no, thou could'st not see it, just as I did; for one thing—the one thing that gave the greatest charm—would not be there for thee. There was my boyhood's home, the warm palpitating heart of the whole scene. And oh! the cruelty of that day! For, even as my eyes caressed it, I grew faint with fear; for was it smoke that curled in momentary

whiffs from underneath the eaves, first in one place, and then in many others? Like Prometheus, I was chained by terror to the rock whereon I stood, and felt the vultures at my vitals, as I watched the destruction I was powerless to prevent. The smoke grew black and blacker, towering upward a demon blotch upon the beauty of the scene. Then came the darting tongues of flame. One flashed out and drew back from the window where so many nights I had sat and watched the stars. I grew sick and dizzy; a mist rose up before my eyes; I thought I heard the roar and crackling of the raging fire; then a low whispering, a loud crash; and, when I looked again, the tall, stately walls and turrets that shone so proudly in the sunlight such a little while before, were now only rubbish. The lovely home, the joy, the pride, the hopes, of the princes of the house of Arpad were all ashes!"

The recollection of this scene so overcame the strong man, that it was some time before he could go on. After Geyza had loved and petted him, and asked him not to mind, and so soothed him with endearments, he proceeded.

"How I got back to our party in the cavern I never knew, so terrible was my suffering. When I had told in broken sentences what I had seen,

Andrew's face grew livid; he stormed up and down the hollow chamber where we were, and vowed deadly vengeance on the heartless cowards; but only the mocking walls re-echoed to his tirade. When his anger had somewhat cooled, we held a consultation, in the midst of which we were interrupted by the entrance of a boy whose scared face filled us with alarm. He brought intelligence that, by the use of gold, one of our people had been induced to guide the soldiers in their search for us.

"At first we argued that to form an ambuscade in some advantageous portion of the cavern and fight was the best course; but more peaceful counsel prevailed, at length; and, further flight to the north being decided upon, we set out at once. As some time would be wasted by the soldiers in the exploration of these caverns, we picked our way forward very leisurely, so as not to tire our horses or ourselves too much.

"Unfortunately, that evening we lighted our campfire too soon, and in too exposed a spot; for some sharp-eyed member of the pursuing party chanced to see the smoke, and a portion of the band was sent forward to investigate it. It was one of our dogs who gave the alarm that night; and we had barely time to mount our horses, before the enemy were upon us. In the hurried flight, and



"I sprang upon the rocky bridge and quickly sped along the dangerous causeway."—Page 75.

owing to the darkness, we became separated. It was near dawn, when in the growing light I discovered that I was alone, and pursued by three or four horsemen; and also that I was ascending the valley of the Aj.

"It was so rough here, that the horses could barely pick their way along; and I noticed that my pursuers had dismounted and were gaining ground afoot. My only hope was to do the same. I was a good climber, and well used to mountain life. As I scaled the hill on one side of the narrowing valley, I discovered, to my joy, that I neared the Devil's Bridge; a natural bridge of rock that spans a deep gorge in this valley, and has such a narrow foot-hold, that it takes the clearest head to venture across.

"Having gained the approach, I sank as if exhausted, and thus induced all my pursuers to renewed efforts in climbing this side of the gorge, certain of my capture. But, when they had nearly reached me, I sprang upon the rocky bridge and quickly sped along the dangerous causeway. I did not look down, but could hear the rumbling of the water on the rocks in the deep abyss far, far below. Danger lurked upon all sides but one; and that was free.

"When I reached the other side, I turned and

saw, as I expected, that my pursuers had not had the courage to follow. But they had the grace to wave their swords and shout in admiration of my skill and daring. I returned their salute good-naturedly; and, plunging into the forest, felt reasonably secure from immediate pursuit.

"With this part of the country I was very familiar; and, remembering a cave that I had once discovered, near the Tatra Mountains, and sure that no other human being had ever seen it, so secluded was it and so difficult of access, I resolved to seek rest and safety there; so, directing my course to the north, before noon I reached the Hernad river. Here I rested a few moments in a grove of beech-trees, and satisfied my hunger with such beech-mast as I could find, and then pushed on up the valley.

"There was a huntsman who had once saved my life, and whose hut I now remembered was near Kesmark. Thither I found my way late that night, confident that I could trust his faithfulness. Gladly he welcomed me, gave me food and rest and comfort, and listened to my sad story. His name was Almos; and no friend or father could have been kinder to me than he was. He stood watch while I slept that night, and the next day carried all the simple luxuries of his home up to

my secret cavern. There he made me as comfortable as possible; brought me fish and game; cooked savory messes for me; and through many hours drove sadness from me, with his strange tales of hunting and adventure. And, what was harder still for him, he journeyed to the towns and cities to gain information for me concerning the welfare of my brother, and to find what danger might still exist in Hungary for either of us."

"Oh! what a kind, dear man!" said Geyza, "I could hug him. Almos—that is a noble name."

"Aye! your great Hungarian ancestor, the first of our race that saw this country, was named Almos."

"Yes, but I love the Almos best who loved my father. It shall ever be a dear and honored name to me. Had he kind eyes, father?—but he must have had."

"Yes, very bright, beautiful and deep, like one who looks long and lovingly at nature where the trees are very green, and the water deep and clear, and the skies so blue, as they are among the Tatra Mountains."

"If ever I grow up, and am married, and have a boy whose eyes are beautiful, I shall name him Almos, in honor of thy kind friend, father."

Bela smiled gently and proceeded with his story.

"He learned that Andrew had escaped and fled to Russia, there to take refuge under the protection of Jaroslav, the Great and Wise, a friend of our grand-father, Michael. King Stephen had declared before the Diet he had called that Andrew and myself were outlawed forever for conspiracy against his life, and that his desire now was that his nephew, Peter, should succeed him. Almost all the people believed in our guilt and held us in abhorrence, so great was their love and reverence for Stephen.

"There seemed no prospect that I could safely live in Hungary. Almos also informed me that there was a party of Polish noblemen, just then hunting in the Tatra, with whom he had had conversation, and who had shown much sympathy for both Andrew and myself, particularly after they had learned from him the best side of our story; and he advised me to meet them; and, on their return, I might accompany them; and that Poland was a safe asylum and nearer Hungary than Russia, offering better opportunity to keep watch upon my chances for return.

"I followed his advice, and readily made friends with the Poles. I was sorry to leave

Almos, and my secret cave, that had been so good a home to me. Almos said he would ever hold it sacred for me, and named it 'Bela's cave.' Moreover, he promised to keep it secret and supplied with arms and food, while he lived, that it might be a safe and ready refuge whenever I might need it.

"So I came hither to seek my fortune. Here I won thy mother for my wife. Years have flown by; many times have I tested my chances for return; but ever my good friends, Almos and Edward, have said, 'Nay, the time is not yet. Wait till thy country calls thee.' And I have waited! waited! like the patriarch, Moses, on the borders of the promised land. And, like Moses, it may be my lot to die in exile. But, surely, my children may be permitted to enter my Canaan!

"When Ladislaus was a baby born, and thou a little child, thy mother was vouchsafed a vision that I have ever hoped would some day come true. She saw ye both in turn wearing King Stephen's crown. At that time I vowed that my two sons should live for the love and glory of my country. Art thou willing, Geyza, when the proper time shall come, to give all that is best in thee to Hungary?"

"Yes, father, yes!"

"Thy strength, thy life, and even thy ambition for a crown, if 'tis better for thy country thou wear it not?"

"Oh yes! dear father, gladly, any sacrifice that may bring peace and happiness and honor to the land thou lovest!"

"Then, my child, kneel with me;" and Bela, with his little son beside him, prayed once more that God in His infinite mercy would grant them service in the cause of Hungary.

CHAPTER VII.

A FEW days after the telling of Bela's story there was great commotion in the palace at Gnesen. Fugitives from the borders of the Vistula came bearing tidings of distress. The Pagans, under Duke Moislav, had sallied out from their stronghold, Warsaw, ravaged the adjacent pasture-lands and driven off much cattle, taking many prisoners also. A hasty council was called by Casimir, and discussion held as to what to do. At the present time the war force was rather small; and, while it was possible to conquer Warsaw, unless a larger garrison were left there than he could spare permanently, the enemy could recruit in their forest retreats, return in force, oc-

cupy the place once more, and continue their depredations as before.

Bela suggested asking Russia to unite with them in exterminating the Pagans of Masovia; for the Russians should be as much interested as the Poles, their country being exposed to like inroads from the eastern borders of Masovia.

“Why not send an embassy to Jaroslav, and broach this subject at once?” said Bela; “and, brother Casimir, thou hast often spoken of the wondrous beauty of the Grand Duke’s sister, Maria; and the time has certainly come that thou shouldest think seriously of taking to thyself a wife. Who more suitable than she? Couldst thou do better for thy country, than secure the interest of so renowned a brother-in-law as Jaroslav?”

“’Tis well said, Bela, ’tis well said; and it likes me much, thy proposition. She is a fair and stately maiden, so they say. Dost thou think, Bela, thou could’st take this most delicate mission upon thyself, to carry my love and reverence to the Grand Duke, and beg his gracious acceptance of certain presents I will send him, and state I crave his sister for my bride? Put well before him the great benefit, to each other and to the cause of Christianity, that such union of our interest and

affections would entail. And, should he listen and approve, ask that at once the action shall be taken. Let him but send a large armed force as escort to the lady, with orders that they coöperate with me in this campaign in Masovia, and all will be well."

"I will gladly undertake the mission," replied Bela. "I need take but a few men with me, enough to preserve the dignity of the embassy."

"While thou art gone I will invest the town of Warsaw, and await the coming of my bride and her escort. The wedding can be celebrated there with fit games and festivities; and then our united armies can undertake the complete subjugation of the Pagans."

Bela's wife was loath to hear that he would be parted from her for so long; for such a journey was a slow and laborious undertaking at that time. But she knew that it was for the best of reasons; she looked forward with great pleasure to the advent of so interesting a new sister; and then she sympathized with her husband in his evident pleasure in the meeting with his brother, whom he had not seen for ten years. So much said about the wonders of the city of Kief, as well as the natural fascination of such a journey, made Geyza anxious to go, too. And Bela, glad to give some

schooling in woodcraft to his son, as well as for the company he would be to him, consented.

The two younger lads looked on with good-natured envy and excitement, while preparations were being made. They made Geyza promise to bring back to them all kinds of things from Russia, if he could get them, from Greek coins to monkeys. His mother gave him a new bright-red tunic with a Greek cross embroidered in cloth of gold upon the breast; and the Duke Bernard presented him with a fine cross-bow of yew, and a quiver full of arrows tipped with the best of shining steel barbs, and feathered with colored feathers.

When he had put on his finery and had buckled on his leathern girdle, its pouches filled with a fancy-hilted hunting knife and light hatchet, the other boys danced about him with great glee; affected fright and terror at his war-like appearance; and, shrinking, hid behind the pillars of the palace porches, or sought protection among the folds of their mother's gowns, laughing and giggling and getting in everybody's way, as all boys do.

But the moment for good-byes came at last, and they were all sober enough then; for it meant months of separation and no tidings of each other's welfare. In the vast plains and forests

grew no telegraph-poles then; and the iron rails that tie the cities to one another now were sleeping in the mountains, their secret hiding places well guarded by the Dwarfs and Trolls, who, rather than give up their kingdom, were paying tribute in the smallest dribs to the genius of mankind. They laughed then, as they saw the people playing with their swords and lances, shields and helmets; looked on with grim composure at the scythes and hinges, bolts and bars, and pots and kettles. But hidden better than their mountain treasures were the human germs that blossomed out a Watts, a Franklin, and a Fulton.

It was a bright, glorious morning when our little party started out; and all strove to keep their spirits up by the blowing of hunting-horns and trumpets, and much waving of the pennons on their lances, cheery promises to keep heart, take care of Geyza—this indeed he thought rather unnecessary, he felt so large and aged now—and to come home safely. And so—and so, the loving looks from parting eyes drew out like spun-glass, till the long, thin, tenacious, gossamer thread was severed, and only memory held one end, the other drifting aimlessly.

With but little incident upon the way, they reached Cracow. A short halt was taken there;

boats were procured, and then they started down the Vistula. Every night they made the shore, and pitched their camp. Geyza took these opportunities to wander about among the great oaks and beeches; and what fun it was, early in the morning, to work up the long, hanging grape-vines, till he reached the closer growth of branches of some beautiful linden; and then to climb from branch to branch along the towering trunk, till almost the very top was reached; and then among the singing birds to sway about in the breeze with that delightful motion which nothing else can give; and gazing out upon the world of tree-tops, the glossy leaves brightening in the sunshine, to see, far off, like faint, translucent clouds, the blue-gray mountains that his father told him formed the borderland of Hungary.

And then to look down between the branches, and see the men below, like queer, colored spiders; and to call to them and see their wondering, upturned faces, hunting vainly in the mass of foliage to discover him, their voices, the clatter of the pots and pans and the whinnyings of the horses telling of some strange world below; and then the crackling fire, the blue smoke curling up far above the trees, a faint smell of boiled carrots and roasted venison, and an inclination, quickly followed, to

drop from branch to branch and, sliding down the vine, to draw up with the hungry crowd to breakfast.

One morning he waked before daylight; for Bela had promised to give him a lesson in deer-stalking. They each wore soft leather sandals, and followed up a small stream to find the deer-lick, which certain native hunters they had met had told them of. The day had so far advanced, that they could distinguish objects near at hand. The breeze was very light; and, as it was necessary to know its direction, Bela asked:

"Which way doth it blow, my son?"

Geyza tried to make it out, but could not.

"Wet thy finger, child, and hold it up. Now, on which side doth it feel the coolest?"

"Methinks this side."

"Then from that side comes the breeze."

"But now, father, I am not sure; there seems not a breath stirring."

"Canst thou cut the top-most leaves above thee?"

"I can try;" and Geyza, already a practised bowman for his age, let fly an arrow at the mark suggested; and so proud was he to have cut a twig at the first trial, that he noticed not which way the leaves were wafted as they fell. Bela commended

his good shot, but laughed at his lack of observation. They immediately crossed to the leeward of the stream, and had not gone far, when Bela said :

“Yonder is the place.”

His practised eye had detected a little in advance of them the trampled nature of the sloping approach to the water. He whispered Geyza to follow him, and make no noise. Cautiously he crept into a hollow place behind some brush, and within bow-shot of the farther bank; and, crouching low, he half buried Geyza and himself in the dried leaves, and waited patiently. The little lad grew weary and disheartened; for it seemed hours to him that they had waited and naught came. Afraid to move or speak, he finally got drowsy; and for a moment he had lost himself, when a gentle nudging from his father woke him.

Alert at once, he looked and saw a beautiful, great stag standing on the opposite bank, his proud head with its glorious antlers held high in air, and his soft nostrils quivering as he stood irresolute, half scenting danger, one foot lifted. So beautiful he looked, that Geyza thought of naught else but to look at him. And Bela, in sympathy with his child, did nothing yet. Slowly, step by step, the dainty monarch drew nearer, trying to pierce their ambush with his eyes; then getting the better

of his fears, he waded knee-deep into the cool, clear water; and, stretching down his long, soft-coated neck, he moved his nose gently to and fro, and gulped down draught after draught. Suddenly his head was lifted quickly; the water fell in crystal drops from the shaggy covering of his throat; his eyes dilated; his haunches sank and his forelegs were lifted for a spring, when—"Whirr!" an arrow from Bela's bow sank in the uplifted breast.

It hindered not the spring; but it was the last he ever made; he fell senseless, partly in the water, and partly on the green-sward of the bank. Wild with excitement, Geyza sprang forward with his father; and, while the latter let the warm blood from the dying animal's throat, he smoothed the soft skin; and then, before he knew it, he was crying.

"Father," he said, "I am afraid I shall make a very poor hunter, for I do not like the killing part. I should like to be able to shoot them, and then have them come to life again, and run off."

"Nay, boy, that would be a needless shock and pain to them, and no use but for sport to thyself. That would be cruel. Now, this fine buck is past all pain; and, look you, how plump and fat he is; he will support the lives of our little party for

some days; and thus help us on our mission, which is one that I hope will bring peace before long to our good Polish peasants."

Geyza blushed, as he perceived how thoughtless had been his good-natured feelings. He helped his father to bear the deer into camp, and was just as proud of it as though it had been his arrow that had done the work.

There were many characters of interest in their band. One was named Thorny; he was a Norwegian by birth and very fat, had fiery red hair and was joked much upon these peculiarities by the others, especially by one young, slight fellow whom they called Glinski. Thorny told many a thrilling tale of adventure on the seas; he had been a great traveller, having seen the Orkneys often, so he said, and once even reached a far-off, mysterious island (Iceland) which he called the jumping-off place.

There was also with them a Hungarian, one who had followed the fortunes of Bela ever since his exile. He was called Hunyady, and was a musical genius, playing beautifully on the harp. Almost all the men had good voices; and much time was spent enjoyably, as they rowed down the river. Tall trees overhung its margin; and in their shade they floated, chatting and telling

stories; listening to the harper, as he sang the wild, war-songs of the nations; or, all joining, chanting in full harmony the music of the church, which rolled gloriously up to heaven from the perfect sounding-board of the water and the trees.

At Sandimir they procured a guide to take them from the nearest and best point upon the river San, to Kief. That part of the journey would have to be made overland. They all welcomed this change in their mode of travel; and their first day-or-so's marches were good long ones. They arrived at the Wiepix river one day, just as night came on, and pitched camp there at once. A little above them a sycamore tree had been uprooted by the early floods, and thrown down across the river, almost bridging it. Geyza spent his time, while awaiting supper, in clambering upon this prostrate giant; and, running out to where some light limbs were suspended just above the water, he laid himself out full-length upon them, and swayed up and down, splashing the water with the branches, and otherwise courting danger.

His father kept his eyes well on him, while he played thus, anxious for his safety, but not wanting to say "No," glad rather to have him learn to hold on with his hands and legs, and above all to know the ups and downs of nature. Some one dis-

covered what looked like a honey-tree, upon the other bank; but, as it grew dark rapidly, they postponed crossing for investigation until the following day. Everyone's mouth watered; however, in anticipation of the coming feast.

Following the directions of Bela, the camp-guards suffered the tired-out party to sleep late; and consequently it was broad daylight when all were wakened by confused shouts and cries. It seems that Thorny, who had a very sweet tooth in his head, had gone to sleep that night with a full determination to wake early, and investigate that bee-tree for himself. He woke—not so very early, but earlier than the others—and started for the sycamore, intending to cross over that way. He had gotten into the branches of the tree, when he discovered that some one else was after honey, too; for he had almost stepped upon the back of a huge brown bear, when an angry growl made him draw himself up quickly on to the limb above him, and at the same time yell for help.

The bear had apparently attempted to go over on the tree; and, finding that it did not reach across, had given up and was returning. It was lucky for Thorny that his bearship at the time needed all fours to hold on to the smaller limbs where he was, and keep his balance; else Thorny

might have felt the force of his paws. The startled man worked his way backwards along the limb on which he had taken refuge as far as he could go; and the bear followed him part way, then stopped, uncertain whether to venture further out upon this swaying support or not. A small branch, projecting upward, separated the two; and to this branch the bear clung, now rising up, now squatting down, in his uncertainty.

By this time the guards, and some of the others who had been awakened by the noise, had hurried to the spot; but so ludicrous a picture did the two present, that the crowd could do nothing but gather on the shore opposite, and make sport of Thorny. He was half kneeling on some branches, and holding to the limb with one hand, while with the other he occasionally flirted a branch he had broken off, in the bear's face. He seemed to have lost his wits with fright.

"Get out, ye ugly beast!" he shouted.

"Yarr—!" snarled the bear.

"O, the Saints and Martyrs! don't! I didn't mean it."

"Tickle his nose again," called one of the men on the bank.

"Shut up! Why don't ye shoot the devil?"

"Grrrr—!" said the bear.

"Oh! don't!—poor bear, good bear."

"Put some salt on his ta—a—il," from the shore.

"Shoot him! shoot him, some of ye—Oh! mercy on my soul!—keep back, you blasted wretch!"

"Grr—wa—grr-wa—grrrl—!"

"Shoo bear, shoo bear, shoood—bear!"

"Shake hands with your friend," yelled Glinski.

"May be ye'd like to change places with a fellow?—Whoop! out! out!—O glory!" as the bear made a dive at him with his claws. "There, there! poor fellow, poor fellow!—By Saint Olaf! if I ever get clear of this, I'll never try again to steal a march upon a honey-tree."

The mention of honey seemed to exasperate the bear still more; he reached out his long claws; and, laying hold of the branch that Thorny waved at him, jerked it out of his hands.

"Help! help! for mercy's sake, will no one put an arrow in his hide?—There! there! Keep quiet, bear! good bear! pretty bear! I will not harm thee, bear."

"He's not a Polish bear; talk Russian to him," shouted Hunyady. "Nudge up closer to him, man; don't stand on ceremony; seest thou not his

gentle hint? Fye, Thorny! would'st thou have a she-bear? He will do the hugging act with satisfaction. Don't be so shy!"

"Ow! ow! quit! scatter!"

And amidst the growling of the bear, Thorny's groaning, and peals of laughter from the crowd, Bela strode up.

"What means this uproar?"

"Why, Your Excellency, our good friend, Thorny, is parleying with yonder grand duke of the forest for a passport to his honey-tree; and, faith! they make much sweet talk about the matter; but have not as yet clasped hands upon it."

"Whatever shall I do, Your Honor?" bawled the poor fellow, now thoroughly exasperated.

"Why, foolish man, drop to the water and swim out of it."

"The Saints forgive me! I never thought of that!" and thoroughly humiliated, his manner changed immediately; he lost all fear; and calmly commenced to unbuckle his girdle and take off his tunic over his head.

"What doth he mean?" exclaimed the astonished Hunyady.

"Perhaps he is stripping for a wrestle with Master Bruin," said Glinski. -

Whatever may have been the reason for his re-

treat, the bear, turning about too awkwardly, lost his balance, and fell rolling down through the branches into the water. At the same moment Thorny dropped also; but, alas, for his new-found composure! He lit squarely on the middle of the bear's back, just projecting above the surface of the shallow water. With a wild spluttering growl the bear reared and plunged and struggled somehow over to the other bank, while the Norwegian slipped backwards, and got a ducking as complete as unexpected.

The disappearance of the bear in the brush broke the spell which all along had withheld the huntsman-spirit of the party; and with hue and cry they dashed across the shallow ford, and were in full chase of Mr. Bruin. But he had gotten too fair a start of them; and one by one they returned, barely less crestfallen than the object of their chaffing, who grumbled that it served them right for missing their excellent opportunity.

After breakfast they gathered around the beech-tree, and, first building a fire of green wood in order to keep the bees off, they took turns with their axes at the great trunk of the tree. Geyza stood a good way off and watched the work with interest, holding a burning torch as protection against the bees, should they come his way. The

men seemed to make slow progress in their cutting, and he wondered that they had the patience to undertake the task.

Finally, Bela, who was superintending, commanded all to draw back to one side; then he had them cut down a tall, slim pine-sapling, cut off the top a little above the first crotch, and trim off the other small branches. This made a long, forked pole, which several of the men placed against the tree-trunk under one of its branches; and with this they pushed all together at the same time that Bela gave two or three vigorous strokes on the other side, with his great axe. There was a tremble, a slow—very slow—movement of the whole vast mass of foliage to one side, a sigh, a rushing sound, like a mighty wind; and the whole forest seemed to be falling in the crash, so large a space of blue sky was left vacant.

The bees had all scurried from their home, like the inhabitants of a conquered city before the dreadful assault of fire-brand and battering-ram that makes ruin of their strong, sheltering walls. Then came the pillage; what a sweet golden store they found of most delicious honey! You must believe that Geyza soon had his hands full, nor stopped to ask for plate or spoon. His face and hands were all one sticky mass of sweetness, till he

had eaten his fill, and the little river washed them clean again. The remaining store, or, at least, all that they could carry was covered with large heart-shaped, linden leaves wrapped in pieces of bark, and packed on the horses' backs.

Another day's journey brought them to the river Bug; and here Glinski grew eloquent about the great battle, which Geyza's great-grand-father, Boleslaw the Great, had, somewhere on this river, made against the flower of the Russians under the command of Vladimir the Great; and how, utterly defeating them, he had driven these flying Russians into their capital, himself riding up, and striking with his sword the famous golden gate of Kief.

Shortly afterwards our travellers entered the town called by the name of this Russian Duke or King; and glad they were of the refreshment they procured. There Geyza saw, for the first time, that terrible race of men, known now as Turks, in a general way, but then called Petchenegs, a fierce race of men who had been enemies of his ancestors before they settled in Hungary. Besides these, and the native Russians of the town, there were some Greeks. He was much impressed also with the strange costumes and languages. But his father smiled and told him to reserve his enthusi-

asia for the journey's end; for then he would see such a variety of the races of the earth as he could not imagine now.

As they continued on their march, they left the high ground and deep valleys behind. The country grew more flat, and travelling was easier, save for their weariness. Game had been plenty all the way, but as yet Geyza had tested his cross-bow with success only upon such things as rabbits and squirrels. One evening, however, they camped near a birch forest, and Bela suggested to him that they should try the next morning if there were any of the ruffed-grouse or birch-partridges to be found there. So, after an early breakfast they started out, Geyza with his cross-bow, and his father with his long-bow and a great bladder.

"What is that queer thing thou carriest, father?"

"A bullock's bladder."

"And what is it for?"

"Wait and see. It is very late in the season to use it, but we can try."

Geyza, much puzzled about its use, kept pace with his father's long stride pretty well for his short legs, until they had made some way into the forest, when Bela cautioned him to move quietly and keep both eyes open for the birds.

A grove of birch trees is a beautiful sight, and our little hero almost forgot what he was looking for in his enthusiastic appreciation of the scene, when—"Whrrr—!" right into his face almost came a blinding rush of feathers. Throwing up his hands before his face he cried out in alarm; a moment more and he took courage to look out. But the grouse—for such it was, a mother bird started at her nest, and who had thus swooped out at him—was flying low beneath the underbrush, a young bird in her beak, and like a shadow disappearing in the distance. She was gone before he had recovered from his surprise. Much chagrined, he tried to turn off his discomfiture by saying:

"Father, why didst thou not shoot the bird?"

Bela smiled, but, growing serious, said:

"It was a brave action, like a true mother, and I would not have stopped so brave a rescue of her child, if I could. But it was strange and unusual thus to carry off her young. Let us see if there are others, her nest must be nigh." But search as they would, they could find nothing more. "Hm—, it must be so; well done!—well and wisely done, my little creature!"

"What, father?"

"Why, it is the custom of the mother-bird,

when disturbed with her young, to cunningly lead the hunter away, by feigning lameness in her wings, and thus tempting him to chase her, as she half runs and flutters. In this way she leads him on so far as she thinks necessary to the safety of her nest; then—‘Whrr—!’ in a moment she is gone. But, undoubtedly, this mother had but the one baby bird, and, bravely darting into our faces, so confused and startled us that she had time to seize her little one and get away before we could recover and draw bow. ‘Twas unusual reasoning to adopt a method which was safer with the one offspring, but which could not have been done with more. I would be proud, indeed, to have as quick a wit myself. Such quickness is the crowning virtue of a general. But let us go further; yonder is a hollow log half hidden in the brush; let us conceal ourselves there and try the virtue of this call.”

So saying, Bela led the way to the log, and both of them knelt down behind it in the brush. Telling Geyza to get ready with his bow, Bela took the bladder and began to beat it with a stick, first slowly, then more rapidly, and then more slowly until he stopped. It made a drumming sound that carried far into the distance. This he repeated several times at intervals, when down from

a neighboring tree came sailing a beautiful great grouse. No sooner did he alight than his broad tail was spread out like a fan, and, with wings stiffened and scraping the ground, he strutted about, uttering a wild and scornful note, his swelling neck throbbing with anger and his bobbing head turning this way and then that, to find the noisy cock who called so out of season; as much as to say he would teach him if he once got hold of him.

Geyza hesitated but a moment; then, with trembling hands, he braced the bow against his shoulder; he could feel his heart flutter, and he could hardly see the bright spot of color proudly strutting there before him. Bringing all his strength of resolution to bear upon his nerves, he took good steady aim at last, and—"Twang!"

"Good! Well done, my boy!" shouted the delighted father; for the bird had risen, feebly fluttered, and fallen headlong, and, with a few spasmodic jerks, lay dead, spitted evenly by the arrow.

How proud the boy was! And how he smoothed the soft feathers, sadly admiring the beauty of the lifeless wings, the wide brown tail, black-striped across, the bright-red spots above the eyes, and the queer, glossy, stiff, black feathers amidst the downy softness of the neck! Bela

looked on with infinite pleasure in his beloved son's enjoyment, and told him much of the habits of the bird, and that the reason of his death was that he had yielded to passionate hate and proud jealousy of some imaginary rival he thought he had heard drumming.

"'Tis ever thus, my child; pride comes before a fall."

When they reached the camp, on their return, they found a wild, hilarious group shouting, laughing and clapping at the fat Norwegian, who was in full chase of Glinski, as he dodged from tree to tree. There had been jumping for the championship; the best jump so far was nine feet, six inches, and all had tried but Thorny. He had then vowed, "by Thor and Odin!" he would show them how they leaped in Norway. Puffing out his cheeks and with much flourish of his arms, he sprang forward to land, not as he expected, in graceful style upon his feet, but prone upon the ground, his arms and legs wildly waving in the air, and his long red hair tossed in disorder about his red face and bulging eyes.

At the ridiculous figure which the Norwegian cut, the others shouted, while Thorny, in a rage from discomfiture at his failure, sprang, or rather rolled, to his feet.

It was at this point that Geyza and his father came up, just in time to see the Norwegian make a lurch at Glinski and grapple him, and both of them go rolling down the steep bank into the water, sink out of sight, come sputtering up again, and stand there in the water to their armpits.

But Glinski wriggled from his grasp and dived, and, dodging under water, swam away and climbed the bank some distance off, spitting and sputtering amidst shouts of laughter from the others.

Geyza's showing of his prize now took the attention of them all, for they were very fond of the little fellow, and glad to praise him for his success.

And so the days wore on. Zhitomir was reached and left behind them, and one evening, as they broke through the edge of a wood, lo! before them, red in the setting sunlight, glowed the domes and turrets of the city of the hundred churches. To the tired travellers of the vast forests it shone like a vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

"O father! that must be Kief, the beautiful."

"Aye! 'tis a grand sight, indeed. Ah! brother Andrew," murmured Bela, "in pleasant places have thy lines fallen."

"Art sorry, father, that thou can'st not hither thyself?"

"Little son! little son! 'tis a just rebuke. Not even to be Duke of Kief would I exchange so brave and good and loving a child as thou hast been to me. No! God knows best; 'tis wicked in me ever to repine, when He has blessed me so."

"How I wish Ladis and Ordulf could see this lovely scene!" said Geyza. "O, father! see! see! There is a river beyond the city; dost thou see it?"

"That is the Dnieper; and, look this way, that is the golden gate where thou seest the gay company of horsemen entering. Listen! Hearest thou the bells?"

And, as they listened, the music grew; tower after tower throughout the vast city sent its sweet, vibrating message out, the call for evening prayer. Reverently they knelt, and fervently Bela begged a blessing on his mission there. Many anxious thoughts crowded on him, as he went forward toward the city gates. Was his brother still living? How would he greet him? How would the great Russian Duke receive his offer? What of delay would that enchanted city hold for him, who now felt a longing to see his wife and younger child? There was no answer to these questions save what time might disclose.

Loudly blew the trumpeter, and while Bela briefly stated to the warden that they came from Poland and bore messages from King Casimir to the most glorious Jaroslav, the heavy gates opened, and the little travel-stained band passed into the protection of the Russian capital.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE our travellers were approaching the city, inside its walls, and all unconscious of his brother's nearness, Andrew was standing on the stone steps that led up to the fine residence which he and his newly-wedded wife were occupying, gayly conversing with several young men. By their dress and manners, fastidious and graceful, one would recognize them as belonging to that class of Russian nobles who attended on the Duke. And such they were; and, as Andrew had so lately been one of their boon companions, they were half-enviously twitting him for his desertion of them.

"Come, Andrew, come! thou need'st not hurry in so soon; thou wilt tire the new wife with such constant dogging of her footsteps and such everlasting clatter of thy tongue." Here they all

laughed merrily, for so much *badinage* had he gotten from the youths that for the last half hour he had done naught but smile and blush. "Usevold, here, will keep his sister company while we show thee how the town is drooping for the want of thy truant wit and merriment. The gallants at the wresting bout have grown sleepy, and the combatants lack spirit. The little Greek maiden at the fruit market is positively pining; not one of us can gain a smile."

"Tush! Andrew," said another, "pose not for a curiosity; come now! and show the clamoring populace thou livest yet; or, faith! we'll be stoned for having slain thee."

"And, O Andrew!" said still another, "the very thing! I know where thou canst get the little Ethiopian page thou desirest for thy lady. A wandering Hungarian merchant showed me two of them this morning at the market; lovely little chaps, about eight years of age, twin brothers. He will sell either one for one hundred denarii, or the two for one hundred and seventy-five."

"I want but one," said Andrew. "Think you he will be at the market now?"

"Aye, possibly; we will pilot thee thither, for thou hast probably forgotten the way by this time."

So saying, the young man, whose name was Mistislav, caught him gayly round the waist, and the crowd went, lightly laughing and singing, down the street. Arrived at the slave market, they quickly found the slave merchant, who still had the two boys, shining ebony and naked to the waist. Andrew exclaimed at their symmetry and their bright, intelligent faces. He patted one upon the head, and said in Russian :

“Would’st thou like to live with me, my boy?”

The child’s eyes glistened as he looked up anxiously into the face of what might be his future master, but did not answer with his tongue, as he did not know the language.

“Ah! my most noble and most gracious Lord,” whined the obsequious merchant, “he could not fall into better hands; but canst thou not take them both?”

There was a strained and longing look upon the other’s face, for he too readily understood the purport of the gestures of the men. Andrew shook his head. “I can but have the luxury of one, though it mislikes me greatly to separate the brothers.”

A dull, lack-lustre, crushed look deadened the other little fellow’s face, while tears started to the

eyes of his more favored brother as he cried in Greek:

"I would rather stay with the cruel master than leave my brother."

Frightened by the dark scowl of the merchant as he let slip these words, he shrunk involuntarily against Andrew's legs. The latter, who understood Greek, turned on the merchant, angrily demanding what the lad meant.

"O, most worshipful master! he is but restive under this incessant dragging about from town to town. But surely," he muttered, "he is mine to do with as I please," and an evil, cunning smile defaced his none too pleasant countenance as he calculated that sympathy might the more induce the noble to the purchase.

"Enough! How much dost ask for the boy?"

"One hundred and fifty denarii."

"What! my friend here said thou offeredst him the lad for one hundred only."

"Tis true, but I have changed my mind since then; I will not part with him for less than one hundred and fifty."

"Go to, then! There is thy money; it makes me blush to think that such a crafty scoundrel is my countryman."

At this he and his turned upon their heels and

walked away, leading the little blackamore by the hand, while he, half glad, half sorry at this change of fortune, looked back longingly at his brother. Scarcely had they passed out of sight when the cruel merchant, enraged at the insult he had received from Andrew, vented his wrath upon the little, lonely, unprotected slave; pinched and buffeted and swore at him, until, in wild desperation, the boy broke from him and ran, with all the might his little legs could give him, in the direction that the young noblemen had taken. Fiercely the Hungarian gave chase, a scourge raised in his hand, while yelling at the top of his voice, "Stop him! Stop him! He is my slave; stop him! Stop the runaway!"

On they sped. Andrew and his friends had turned into a shop, and, as the chase went by, came hurriedly out to see what all this noise meant. They got out just in time to see the pursuer grasp the boy and strike him to the ground, then raise his scourge again in both hands high above his head. Andrew ran toward him but turned his eyes away, loath to see the pitiless blows he knew would descend ere he could reach him.

But there was nearer succor. Like a streak of red fire, a little bright-coated boy had dashed across the pavement and, standing astride the pros-

trate black with clubbed crossbow, glared defiance at the inhuman monster, and in ringing tones cried out, "Thou shalt not strike!"

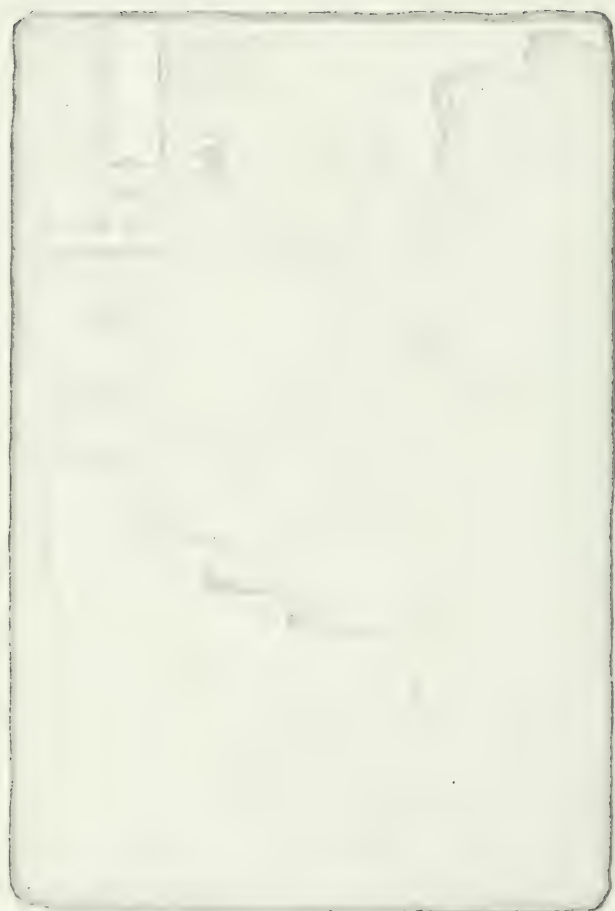
It was a picture for a painter. The helpless black, the rough, half-civilized power of the strong man, and the little red guardian figure with the golden cross upon his breast, and outraged justice shining in his eyes. Geyza had instinctively used the Hungarian language, but the angry merchant, though checked for a moment by the imperious command, scornfully shouted:

"Shalt not! Who says 'shalt not' to Vaik? Thy shoulders, then, shall feel the blow!" As he said this his descending arms were caught in a grasp of iron, and, lifted by a giant's strength, he was hurled through the air and alighted in a pile of dirty rubbish yards away.

"There, carrion, is the home of anyone who dares to raise a hand against the son of Bela, Prince of Hungary!"

All this had taken place so rapidly that Andrew barely got up in time to hear the last few words. Surprise, delight and pride passed over his features as, with both hands extended, he almost whispered:

"Can it be my brother Bela? Welcome, welcome, brother! I am Andrew; dost thou know



"Glared defiance at the inhuman monster, and, in ringing tones
cried out, 'Thou shalt not strike.'"—Page 112.

me not?" and they fell into each other's arms, even as Joseph and Benjamin of old.

Geyza, nervous with delight, was then presented to his uncle, and soon after, pulling at his father's sleeve to gain attention, he whispered:

"Father, do not forget the black boy; do not let the cruel master have him more; please, buy him for me and Ladislaus, father."

"Give me that pleasure, brother," spoke up Andrew. "Here, thou rascal merchant; thou may'st have half thy price for this poor slave, or thou may'st cool thy heels in the deepest dungeon Kief can offer till such time as thou may'st answer for thine assault upon the guest of the Grand Duke."

This bargain was quickly struck with the now thoroughly humbled merchant, and he slunk away, while upon Andrew's cordial invitation the entire party started for his home, Geyza leading the grateful black along as though he was some curious and unknown animal, for he had never seen so black a creature in his life before.

Arrived at the house, servants took charge of Bela and his party, assigned them rooms, and left them to bathe, oil, and otherwise prepare themselves, with the more comfort to meet the lady of the house. Geyza was delighted with the profuse

luxuriance of his surroundings; so much grander, as he told his father, than even the palace at Gnesen; such great ferns and palms and lovely flowers everywhere; and the fountains with their cool pattering sound of falling water; the myriad candles, that made everything bright now as night came on.

Then, when he and his father were ushered into the great hall, the brilliant company of beautiful ladies and fine gallants, richly dressed, made his cheeks glow with excited pleasure. They had all heard of his heroic action, and the bright smiles and caresses showered upon him made wild confusion in his little head; and he said, "Indeed, 'tis true!" when one of the nobles complained, with rueful face, it was not fair. After they had been served with a luxurious repast, the tables were removed and gay scenes followed. Geyza felt very well content to have the beautiful new aunt hold him beside her, toying with his curls, as she talked sweetly to his father about the virtues of her husband. And, listening to soft music that stole in from the open doors, feeling the gentle, soothing touch of fingers so like his mother's, the tired little fellow dropped his nodding head upon her breast and slumbered.

"Let me take the child to bed," said Bela.

"Nay, do not disturb him yet; I love to hold him thus. God grant that I may have just such a darling of my own some day to cherish. Dear little nephew!" and she touched his forehead with her lips.

Bela went to sleep that night delightfully refreshed, yet dreading even more than ever the diplomatic undertaking that he had before him. The culture, the beauty and the greatness of Russia's capital must be the result of wise, wise government. How could he, a simple soldier, hope to impress such a magnificent Duke so as to obtain all that his adopted country so much needed? But he could not turn back now; he must go on.

The next morning, with his escort in their best array, and Geyza also, he accompanied Andrew to the royal palace. The officer of the court conducted them to one of the ante-chambers, and prayed them kindly wait a while; that Jaroslav was then busy with learned men upon his written code of laws, and that that which he considered the most important work of his whole life could not be interrupted till a certain hour. This would make it necessary that they wait a little. Andrew was much chagrined that his brother's embassy should thus be made to wait; but Bela minded it not, for

he became interested at once in talking with the officer about this great enterprise of the Grand Duke.

He learned that wager of battle and trial by ordeal were established laws in this code; that, furthermore, it was the first written code Russia had ever had. In this way time quickly passed; and trumpets announced the hour arrived, when, seated in state upon his throne, the Grand Duke of Russia would receive his people and all foreign embassies. The officer, disappearing for a moment, returned and motioned Bela to follow with his suite. They entered the great audience room, and Bela, advancing toward the throne, bent his knee before the Duke, while the officer proclaimed aloud, "Bela, Ambassador from the King of Poland, and his suite."

The great man, whose strong face was deeply lined with marks of thought and character, rose at once, and, stepping down, graciously took Bela by the hand and begged him to be seated at his side. There was something in the earnest eyes of Jaroslav that won Bela's heart at once. It seemed to him that here was a man who had all others' interests at heart before his own. And in Bela the Russian Duke saw—what? A patient, willing, mighty force. Those great sad eyes, so clear,

unwavering and gentle; the towering stature, the hard muscles and large, rugged hands, already scarred, told the character of a man whom one would wish to lean on as a friend.

"It gives me great pleasure to meet the brother of my newly-made son-in-law, Andrew; and I will gladly learn thy mission from the King of Poland."

"Casimir, my King, sends thee his love, and begs thou wilt accept, as token of his friendship, the casket which my attendants here convey."

At a motion from Bela, two of his men brought forward a cunningly wrought silver casket, which they held, kneeling; till Bela, rising, took it from them and laid it beside Jaroslav.

The latter, smiling pleasantly, took it up and, looking at it, murmured:

"'Tis very quaint." Then keenly eyeing Bela, he said, "What wants your King?"

All the smooth phrases which Bela had made ready forsook him at this sudden question. He hesitated, blushed and stammered; then, frankly meeting the Duke's gaze with a steady, trustful look, he simply, quietly and with growing eloquence told the plain truth about the necessities of Poland, and ended thus:

"O, wise Duke! Poland seeks to be thy

brother. It is the strongest tie 'twixt men of honor. There is no greater gift within the power of Poland. Wilt thou accept it?"

"Noble Bela, can I refuse it? The man who wants me is the one I want above all others. But we must gain the will of still another. If thou canst plead before my sister, as thou hast done to me, sure success will be the issue. But one thing I must have from Casimir: his grandsire did from my father gain certain cities; thou hast passed through some of them; the people are Russian, my children. These cities he must needs return to me, or future trouble may arise, for children's interests sometimes part the best of brothers. Let us to my sister!" and, rising, he dismissed the court, and they went out together.

Geyza had not lost a word of this conversation; and, though he may not have comprehended all of it, he knew enough to see that his father bore himself, the equal (in fact, he thought him the superior) of the famous Russian Duke. Sturdy little man, wherever he and his great father went together, they drew all eyes.

The beautiful Maria received them graciously, and with such dignity and gentleness did Bela urge the suit of Casimir, telling how kind a brother, reverent a son, and learned a prince he

was, that she yielded to the wishes of her brother; and, stipulating certain delay necessary to prepare for so great a circumstance, she agreed to accompany Bela upon his return. Jaroslav took such a liking to Bela, that naught would do but he must see the many institutions which it was his special pride to have created. This, to Bela, was not only an honor, but a matter of deep interest.

They visited the schools for boys, a wonderful enterprise in such an age and among such a primitive people; heard the trained singers in the churches, and, above all, saw the magnificent mosaics in the Cathedral of St. Sophia. Here Geyza loved to sit and see portrayed before his eyes the sweet story of the Saviour. It was only crude mosaic work, but it told the love and suffering of our Lord better than anything else did, in that old time. He fell in love with the soft-sounding name, Sophia, and it ever was the sweetest woman's name to him.

One of the chief wonders of this wonderful city, to him, was, as his father had foretold, the vast number of strange nationalities that found their way hither. Here were Greeks and Romans, Jews, Turks and Servians, Moors, Saracens and Ethiopians, and many, many more. Particularly at this time great interest and excitement centered

in the Bulgarians, who, in open rebellion against the weak and dying Emperor of Constantinople, Michael IV., under the direction of the base-born Deleanos, constantly sent ambassadors asking help from Russia. This rebellion Jaroslav could not countenance, for, inefficient as the Greek Emperor was, there was no legal or universally acknowledged head to the Bulgarians; and, being at peace with Greece, he could not interfere. Still these Bulgarians came and were entertained, and made fiery speeches, scornfully abusing the paralytic Emperor and his—as they deemed her—shameless wife.

But such talk roused the ire of Andrew and others of the nobles, and they reprimanded such speech about the last descendant of the mighty Macedonian dynasty which had held up the power of art, literature and science, against the crushing forces that had drowned them out of every other European country.

It was these people, and their talk about far-off countries, that taught our little hero what a wide, wide world it is, and how hard it is to keep the balances of justice even between nations. He did not put his thought into words, but the idea grew there, just the same, to try and hear both sides of

every question, and then to think on which side he would rather trust his honor.

But you must not think that this was the only kind of entertainment that Geyza had. Oh, no. He was a little boy, and played most of the time about his uncle's house; and such a fine place it was to play in! There were other boys in Kief, too, and the little blacks were a circus in themselves; now dressed in pretty page's costumes, still showing enough of the black to suit anybody's taste for ebony. They could stand on their heads and walk on their hands, and in the long corridors transformed into black cart-wheels, they chased each other till your eyes would swim to watch them. Geyza tried his best to copy these accomplishments, but found that his attempts mostly ended in heavy falls upon the paved floors, in which experiments he proved that he could make a cry stay down, if he could not make his legs stay up.

But when they went to swim in the great baths of Greek or Roman pattern, so deep that the boys could run and dive, or jump in with arms extended upward, and, straight as an arrow, cleave the water like a javelin and sink out of sight, while the round wave-rings, gently spreading, lapped the edges of the basin—that was sport!

They would come up again with a sputter and a head-shake, spread out their arms, and, their heads thrown back, float idly, till—"Chug!" would go one foot and then the other; and then, perhaps, a lively chase of one another, splashing each other's faces, climbing the steps, and shouting in glee, as, little, dripping, naked figures, they ran about the edge of the basin and dived in again.

Yes, that was fun. But that, too, was something Geyza had to learn; and bravely did he struggle to succeed, calling to his father in his first achievements, "Look, father! look, look! Didst thou see, father?—I—ha—I made—three—ah—three strokes all at once. I can swim, father, really and truly swim. Couldst thou make three strokes when first thou learnedst to swim, father, when thou wast a little boy in Hungary? Couldst thou, father? all at once and not hold on to anything? Now, just look, father! look! I'll show thee again!" and away he goes. It is as much as one able-bodied attendant can do to keep track of him and see he does not drown; and, had you seen him coming out of the water, red and dripping, his hair hanging in straight strings about his head and face, puffing and blowing, you would have taken him for just an ordinary boy; nor seen in him the future, brave, upright, glorious King of Hungary.

But even little boys' holidays come to an end, and the preparations of prospective brides are accomplished. The fair Maria had seen safely finished her two or three dozens of this dainty article, and her dozen of that, her wonderful and costly bridal dress of lace and silk and jewels, her robes and cloaks and girdles for all possible and impossible occasions; all her dearest lady friends had seen and gloated over these, and many others I would not dare to mention for fear you might not believe me, and I could not show them to you to make my word good; for they were all worn out, or lost, or sold, or stolen, hundreds and hundreds of years ago. But they were all there then, and very real to the Princess who was going to be married to a man she had never seen in all her life.

The last day in Kief has come. The great flat boats rise and fall at their moorings, with the gentle heaving of the bosom of the Dnieper. The sun shines on the armor of thousands of soldiers, as they march down the streets in steady order and embark. These are the troops which the Grand Duke sends as his contingent in the Masovian campaign, and as the escort of his sister. On horses handsomely caparisoned, nobles, officers and courtiers surround the Duke as he rides beside his sister to where the graceful barge, resplendent with flags

and streamers, awaits his coming. Hurried farewells have been said by Geyza and his father to all the kind friends they are leaving, and promises of love and prayerful memory have been given; the embarkation is effected, the long oars of the rowers project in glistening rows above the blue waters, the Grand Duke waves his hand, the nobles wave their flashing swords in air, the trumpets sound, the bells ring out, the assembled multitude break out in cheers and shouting, the oars fall into the water, and the voyage commences.

"Hi! hi! hi!" "Run! run!" "Look at the little beast! what's he up to?" "Stop him!" And through the crowd, like a streak of lightning, the little Ethiopian dashes; out the long pier he goes, and, with a mighty leap for such a midget, he takes the water. Attracted by the unusual commotion, Geyza catches sight of him, and a quick word to his father makes him order the rowers of the barge to stop and back-water. Geyza finds his way to the stern, and, waving his cap to the little swimmer, calls him to come on. A few minutes more and his little page, breathless and excited, climbs into the boat, with help, and falls at Geyza's feet; and, with this last addition to their force, the flotilla again proceeds.

The secret of this episode was the reluctance

of Hekla, Geyza's page, to leave his brother, Amru. And Geyza, in the generosity of his heart, had said he might remain. But our hero once really started, Hekla, who had grown extremely fond of him, felt a tugging at the heart that, joined to gratitude and duty, got the better of his other inclinations, and resulted as we see.

CHAPTER IX.

UP the Dnieper to the Pripet, and thence to where transportation could be best effected through the swamps (so full this year), was the course planned out. All went well as could be expected with such a large body of men and horses cramped and confined within the boats for so long a time. But frequent stops were made where good land offered; and there was little sickness among the troops. The rowers, stripped to the waist, and well coppered by the sun, were the greatest sufferers, but they were changed often, and only one died upon the way.

Where there was opportunity to make cross-cuts, the horsemen would take the land for a change. Geyza was always in this party, for the Grand Duke had given him a fleet wild ass, one

that had been bred and trained in the Russian town of Minsk, and he was anxious to try him at every opportunity. Bela did not always join these parties, as he thought it ungallant to desert the Princess continually; but he always felt a little nervous till he had his boy safe with him again.

On one of these occasions, upon the Pripet, the boats found the horsemen waiting for them late one cloudy morning. As they came aboard, Bela, looking anxiously for Geyza, could nowhere discover him. Inquiry developed the fact that he was last seen riding ahead of the party toward the river, glimpses of which they had seen from a slight elevation about a half-hour's ride from where they halted for the boats, and upon their reaching the river, which took place an hour previously, his absence had not been noticed.

Bela instantly organized a searching party and scoured the neighborhood until noon without success. Upon their return they found the noon meal prepared, but Bela could not eat. He paced about, his heart sick with dread of evil to his boy, and tried to think what could have happened to him. He could not have been thrown from his ass and injured, or in their thorough search they would have found him, surely; neither could he have been attacked by some wild animal, or his

shouts would have been heard. Had he fallen into the river, and, encumbered with his clothing, or caught by some snag under the water, been drowned? He shuddered at the horrible thought. Or had some human enemy captured, gagged and carried him off into captivity? He thought of him sold into slavery, and in some far-off country under cruel treatment, dragging out years of suffering. What should he do? What could he do?

Ah! An idea came to him. He recollected how, when the riding party started out that morning, the wild ass, Beauty, nervous from confinement on the boat, had reared and plunged, and, breaking away from Geyza's loose hold, ere he mounted, tried to run away, but was caught by someone before he got fairly started. Could it be possible that, arrived at the river here, Geyza, dismounting, had been careless of his hold again, and Beauty had run off, Geyza given chase, and before he fully realized it, lost his way; had wandered farther, in his efforts to get back, and so might even now be trying to return, faint and weary, somewhere in the vast solitude of the deep forest that stretched for miles and miles behind them?

Now his thoughts flew. He could never return to his wife and Ladislaus without the son and brother. He would stay and search that forest till

he found him. He called to one of the Russian nobles who had joined the expedition, and, telling him of his intentions, placed the Princess in his care, and the expedition under his command; and, reserving for himself one of the guides, all his old party (experienced woodsmen), and one of the smallest boats, bade the others hasten to Casimir and tell him that he would come on as soon as he had found his son.

Dividing his small force, Bela stationed some with the boat as a base of action and supplies, and the others proceeded at once to take the woods in squads of twos and threes. All that afternoon they invested the forest on all sides, constantly shouting and blowing bugles. Night came, and one by one, all the searching parties but Bela and his squad returned to camp, disheartened. Later, one of these came in with orders from Bela for some of them to follow him as soon as light would permit, with provisions; he would leave traces of his course.

The day was well nigh ended fruitlessly, when Bela chanced to mention to a native Russian, the guide whom, as luck would have it, he had added to his squad, that Geyza's wild ass had led him a sore chase, and he bemoaned the day when the Grand Duke had made him such a present.

"The Grand Duke! sayest thou?" the man replied. "I have a friend in Minsk who told me he had lately sold a fine ass to the Duke; perchance it was the same."

Another idea came to Bela.

Which way is Minsk from here?"

"That I know not; but this morning I heard an officer say that Minsk was due north, northeast from there, but what direction we are now from the landing, or how far, I know not."

Bela, at home in the woods, could easily arrive at that; but what concerned him most was how to ascertain the points of the compass. The sky was overcast with clouds, so that the sun's whereabouts was lost. He felt certain now, knowing the tricky, tantalizing nature of the ass, that Geyza must have been induced to pursue him very far, and that the instinct of the animal would be to travel toward its old home, Minsk. In that direction lay his best hopes of finding his dear boy. But, Oh! the agony of uncertainty! How can he tell the way? Vainly he tries to think. Certainly there must be some way. Leaning his head upon his arms against a tree to shut out all else but thought, he tries to search his brain, but nothing comes save aimless, wandering anxiety. Faint with the

struggle to master his nervous confusion, he breaks out in prayer.

"O God! help me, help me!"

Deep stillness lays its soothing hands upon his quivering muscles, and lulls them into rest; the ringing in his ears subsides, and in its stead a faint and far-away voice of nature drops, like hope's anchor, in the storm-tossed emotions of his heart. Had he really heard it? Hark!

"Honk, honk," and clearer still, "Honk, honk," directly overhead.

"To the trees! An hundred denarii to the man who first points them out!"

But who can climb so well as Bela? He seems to run up, so swiftly does he rise from limb to limb. Reaching the top as nearly as he can, he bends the light branches down, and rapidly sweeps the leaden sky with his keen eyes, and listens. He hears naught, sees naught, when Hunyady from a neighboring tree calls out, "Yonder to the windward!" and, sure enough, his strained eyes catch the dotted wedge, far, far away. 'Tis gone; 'tis there again; and now 'tis lost. But the wild geese have left for Bela in their wake a line, faint indeed, but one that he could follow to the pole. Carefully, with his companions' help, he locates the direction, and, descending, prepares to follow up the search

toward Minsk, first sending back a messenger with orders, as before related.

Until quite late that night they pushed slowly on, stretched out abreast in as long a line as the three of them could make, and keep within hearing of each other. About midnight they desisted, and in primitive fashion rested until daylight. But Bela could find no sleep. He stood watch, while the others slept, and as soon as there was light sufficient to renew the search, he aroused them, and they started on. Every time he blew his hunting horn the others would answer, and then all would stop a moment and listen. He found himself mechanically marking off the spaces between bugle calls from one tree to another, like the weary traveller on an unknown railroad, who counts the stations, hoping that each one will be the last before his destination.

In this way he marked a large poplar, not far away, as the next point at which to sound his horn, and, when in the act of raising it to his lips, he noticed a peculiar thing—out of the poplar tree was a bushy growth of linden. He had never seen so strange a freak before, and, quickly stepping up to examine more closely, he discovered that the tree was hollow, and these linden branches filled the entrance. Dropping his horn, he jerked the bar-



"Then he rose to his feet once more, and such a volume of sound as rolled out of that horn, blast after blast!"—Page 133.

ricade away, and, down on his hands and knees, peered in. All that he saw was a little, curled-up, sleeping boy. Yes, that was all. Then what made him reach in his arms, and, taking the warm, soft, little hand in his, cry and cry, just like a woman?

Then he rose to his feet once more, and such a volume of sound as rolled out of that horn, blast after blast! It soared exultant, filling the vast aisles and arched vaults of the forest with the joy of a human heart almost bursting to find utterance.

Geyza waked up; he couldn't help it; and there he stood with wide, staring eyes, framed in the oval opening, like the spirit of the mammoth tree, and waiting to leap into his father's arms. The men came running, breathless, wondering, yet guessing what the noise was for, and just in time to see this pretty picture and take their part in the general rejoicing.

"But, father, where is Beauty?—Oh, yes! there she is!" and, sure enough, there was the naughty beast, plunging about and straining at her halter where, some distance off, she was tied to a low, swinging branch of an oak tree.

"In the name of all that's wonderful, my child, what fairy tied her there?"

And so Geyza told them all about it as they journeyed back.

"You see, father, she is such a cunning Beauty, that she watched her chance and pulled away from me while I was waiting at the river, and then she would run off a little way and nibble at the grass, and, when I would think I surely had my hand upon the halter, off she would go again. I did not want to lose her, for Ordulf and Ladis will go wild about her, and so I kept trying and trying until I had gone a long, long way. I might have given up and gone back then, but I had gotten so turned about I could not tell which way was the right one. Then I tried to catch the wicked little Beauty, that I might not get so tired in trying to find the way. And so I kept on, going farther and farther, until I was tired out and lay down to rest. I must have slept a long time, for when I awoke it was almost dark, and there was Beauty rolling on the ground with her heels in the air. That was the time when I was too quick for her. Having caught her, the next thing I did was to tie her tight to that oak branch, while I thought what to do."

"She must have wanted to go to her old home, and still not wanted to part with thee," said Bela.

"What a queer Beauty thou art," said Geyza, patting her. "But, father, I was so hungry and

thirsty; I roamed about, and found a brook, and drank all I wanted, and took Beauty there, too, holding her very tightly this time; and then, as it got very dark, I tied her up again; and then I found the hollow tree, and I broke some low branches off a linden, and crawled in, pulling the branches after me to close the hole up. I had to go to sleep without my supper, and I haven't had any breakfast yet, either, father."

"Poor child! neither have I; but here it comes, I hope," and through the trees they could see the approaching horses of the relief party from the camp.

They ate enough breakfast to make up for the lost supper, too; and before the end of the day were back at the camp on the river. The next morning they set out for home, but through some mistake on the part of their guide, lost several days more on the way.

It was late in the afternoon when they drew near to Warsaw, coming overland to the Bug river, and, as the Vistula came in sight, a gay scene was presented to their view. The water was calm and clear as crystal. Russian and Polish flags were flying from every turret of the citadel. Lining the river-banks on either side were thousands of people in bright colors. Up and down among

them caracoled gay knights with pennon-decked lances. The wide plain blossomed with the white tents of a great army, which, under the walls of the city, were drawn up in martial array, or were seen marching down in solid ranks of glistening armor to the river-front. Boats, great and small, and many fancy barges, filled with knights and ladies, soldiers and peasants, all in holiday attire, were clustering together toward a central spot below the town, while a solitary boat or two lagged behind in picturesque loneliness.

"A fête! a fête!" cried Geyza.

"Ah! we are just in time to be too late," said Bela.

Just then a piercing shriek rang out from below where they stood looking at this scene, and out from the shore darted a small, narrow boat containing two men and a small boy.

CHAPTER X.

IN ORDER that we may better comprehend the nature of this scene, it will be necessary to return to the people that we left behind in Poland, months before.

Casimir, making all necessary preparations, led his army to the Vistula; and set them down before Warsaw, putting that stronghold in a state of siege. Assaults were made, walls demolished and many men slain. Attempted sorties also were repulsed; and by July the place surrendered. Then Casimir, rebuilding the shattered walls, sent for his mother, sister, and other ladies of his court; and patiently awaited the arrival of Bela and his precious convoy.

At last they came—the first installment, with the Princess; and sorrow was mingled with the joy

they brought; yet all trusted in the well-known ability of Bela. They waited some time for his return, putting off from day to day the celebration of the marriage. But, courtesy forbidding any longer delay, the wedding finally took place.

After the ceremony was over, a great feast was spread, and afterwards the games commenced; trials of skill in running, jumping, wrestling, throwing of javelins, and archery; then a grand review upon the plain, of all the army, marching and countermarching before the royal party; and when that was over, a general gathering to the river to view the boat-race. Casimir and his bride and mother, together with Bernard and other distinguished guests and courtiers, escorted to the river bank by the royal guard, entered a stately barge, adorned with double-seated throne, of white enamel, with golden arms, and draped in rich purple and soft ermine. Four slaves with white, sleeveless jerkins, purple-bordered, and gold bands upon their arms of ebony, held aloft on gilded poles a white canopy embroidered with the arms of Poland and of Russia.

There was a cunningly-arranged effect as though a pond of water lilies floated at their feet; and garlands of roses were festooned about the canopy and loosely reined the long lines of rowers

to each other; while at either end, skilled players upon lute and harp, gave rhythmic motion to the oars, and seemed to waft them on with the music. Down the steep, terraced banks from the city walls came an excited throng of men and boys surrounding the contestants of the coming race. Among them, with quiet mien, walked Gudrod, and beside him, Ludolph, talking gayly and apparently attracting the admiration of the crowd by his breadth of chest and large, muscular arms (they were all stripped to the waist), as being the probable champion.

But their eyes frequently wandered to where a huge Franconian stalked, bearing his head high and boasting of certain races before the Emperor, where skilled boatmen from all Europe had participated, and where he came out the victor, while the poor, lifeless Saxons fell far behind. This talk much provoked Ludolph, for whom it was intended; and he, turning carelessly toward the Franconian, said:

“My most worthy Conrad, did not the Emperor invite thee to approach and sit by him upon his throne, and hold converse with thee, as to how it was that the Franconians found it so easy to run away from these same poor Saxons, on land as well as water? It is strange, forsooth, that so great a

wind-mill as thyself should go so well by water!" This brought the laugh on Conrad.

"An it would not be discourteous to the King and Queen, I would give thee thy fill of water, Saxon!"

"It would do him good to dampen his airy feathers somewhat," said a long, lithe, muscular figure at his side.

"Sayest thou so, my snaky Sanudo?" said Ludolph. "'Tis a pity ye Venetians grow no feathers, or ye might soar more often from your slimy bed, and see how heaven looks in free Germany. How comes it that thou didst escape thy master, Peter, to come hither?"

The Venetian answered nothing; but a baleful look darted from his eyes, and his fingers worked.

Conrad and Sanudo had been residents in Stuhlweissenburg; and, in the overturning of Peter's rule, had fled northwards, with other refugees, into Poland. But they did not like the people that they found here, and felt plainly that it was not safe for them to stay much longer. In hopes, between them, to gain some prize-money, they had entered for this race, with the determination to leave Poland afterwards for a more congenial country.

Each contestant had his choice of boats, which were of varied makes and sizes; and, while the

irregular assortiment took somewhat from the beauty of the start, it enabled the spectators the better to distinguish their favorites.

Not a ripple stirred the water; and perfect silence reigned, while all eyes were directed to where Bernard, in the judge's boat, held aloft a long, shining lance with white, fluttering pennon. With a quick motion he swept it to the water; and the boats sprang forward amid the cheering of the multitude. Almost at once the Franconian took the lead; while, closely following him, with even, steady, powerful strokes, came Ludolph; then, with several others, Gudrod and the Venetian. The latter, in a very narrow boat, seemed to make no exertion at all, so supple were his motions; and Gudrod, with long, easy strokes, seemed resting, almost, at each recovery.

Behind them followed the vast concourse of floats and barges filled with excited people; and the spectators, on the banks, shouted encouragement, and for a short space ran abreast of them. They turned the two-mile-stake in much the same order as they had started out; save that there was greater distance between Conrad and those behind him, and that Gudrod had caught up with Ludolph; so had the Venetian, who was leading slightly; and some stragglers had dropped out.

About midway between the start and turning-stake, on the right bank of the river, almost the last of the spectators, and in a low flat-boat, comfortably seated, were Bela's wife and the lady Bertha, with their two children, Ladislaus and Ordulf. Unsettled by her anxiety for Geyza's safety, his mother shrank from participation in the festivities of the day; but, urged by the little boys, who were all excitement, she had consented to attend the race, at least, in this inconspicuous way. Of course, the interest of the boys centered in Ludolph and Gudrod; and they were considerably annoyed to see the Franconian so much in advance. But, having passed the stake, Ludolph—who had been saving his strength—anxious to make a good showing before his Duke's wife, and his little pet, Ordulf, bent to his oars; and, darting ahead of his near opponents, sang out, "Good-bye, Snoody."

But Sanudo was not thus to be deserted. His supple body swayed more rapidly; and his boat drew up to, and then ahead of, Ludolph's; while Gudrod challenged the wonder of the watchers, in that he had, without apparent change in his slow, sweeping strokes, kept side by side with Ludolph. A few moments more, and the three had closed up the space between them and the Franconian, then

passed him, though he struggled with all his might.

As they drew near our friends, Bertha said:

"Ah! the generous Gudrod; he will not try to win, unless Ludolph's chance be hopeless."

Ordulf could scarce contain himself; but, swinging his cap, he shouted:

"Courage, noble Ludolph!"

And Ludolph answered:

"Aye, my darling!" and put all his strength to work; but the sleek Venetian, with a scornful smile upon his lips, kept still the lead.

Then the excited Lady Bertha, springing up by Ordulf's side, called out to Gudrod:

"Let not the slave Italian gain the purse, Gudrod; speed thee, for the honor of dear Norway!" (She was the daughter of Harold Greyfeld, King of Norway.)

And then it was that Gudrod, bending low his body, quickened his marvellous stroke, and like an arrow shot past Samudo; and, amid the thundering shouts and roars of the admiring crowds, went on and on, through the thronging barges, to where his proud Duke stood exultant in his victory. And then he found his way to where the royal barge awaited his modest, slow approach to claim, from the hands of Poland's new and beauteous Queen,

the laurel wreath, and, from the King, the purse; while the harps sounded triumphant strains of music.

But, hark! they, too, have heard that piercing, agonizing shriek. What means it? Hurrying horsemen on the east bank are soon shouting to them:

"Help! help! Duke Bernard's son is stolen!"

The laurel crown falls from Gudrod's head, and the purse drops from his hand to the river-bottom. "Way!" he almost groans; and through the parting crowd of boats, he sends his own once more. Had he rowed before? Now he flew! and many others, scarce knowing what they did, were following him, among them the half-crazed father.

When Sanudo recognized the fact that Gudrod was more than his match, he quietly dropped behind to where Conrad was still feebly working, blown and discomfited, and allowing all the others in the race to pass him; and with the words, "Slave Italian," still ringing in his ears, sore with his failure in the race, and smarting still from Ludolph's contemptuous language, he caught hold of Conrad's boat.

"Let go, thou fool!"

"Hist! lovest thou the Saxon Ludolph?"

"As I love the plague."

"Yonder are the Duke's wife and her son. Thou knowest how he holds the boy."

"As the apple of his eye. What meanest thou?"

"We have no place in this cursed land. At Plock, not far below upon this river, they say the Pagans have been gathering again in force. A heavy ransom would the child bring. We could have a good mile's start as well; for all are gathering to the finish. The two of us, with this light boat, the swiftest here for this still water——"

"Indeed, good Sanudo, it is worth the trial; and 'twill well repay the Saxon Ludolph for his insolence."

So, drifting quietly to the shore, they float gently down to where our joyous group are gazing abstractedly up the river. Ordulf, holding to an upright pole and leaning far out to get the best view, sees not the boat that slowly edges up to them, nor does anyone else, till he finds himself struggling in the strong arms of Conrad, as with a quick pull upon the oars, Sanudo sends the quivering boat far out upon the water.

The startled mother intuitively knows the danger; and all her soul goes out in that most thrilling of all cries, "Help!" While Ordulf stretches out his little arms to her and calls, "Mother! mother!"

"Hush thy noise, or I will kill thee, Saxon brat!" and Conrad throws him to the bottom of the boat, and holds him there, terrified, with his fierce, glaring eyes; then, taking the pair of oars that he had placed there from the other boat, he lends his aid; and they speed onward down the river.

Where, where is help to come from? More than a mile away, and the news has not yet reached them; and all the brilliant rowers in the best boats are tired from their great exertions, when Ladislaus, looking up the bank, calls out:

"Father! father!" and rushing up to where his father stands; "O father!—Ordulf!—they are stealing Ordulf! Save him, father!"

The great bow bends before the strong knee; and the looped cord is fastened in its place. One more strong pull, O Sanudo! and thy last earthly race is run. The whistle of the arrow, and the dying groan of the Venetian tell Conrad where the danger lies. There against the blue sky, red in the setting sun, stands out the tallest and the mightiest man in Poland, with sure death in his hands.

"Ah! youngster, hither, quick, stand thus, thy hands upon my shoulders; obey or die!"

The useless oars of the Venetian are dropped



"O father! Oduff! They are stealing Oduff." Page 146.

overboard; and the boat continues on its course. Cunning Conrad, with thy living shield!

Bela's horse has been sent forward; and the race, if any, must be on foot against the boat. The oarsman is encumbered by the boy; there may be a chance. Try it! try it! And he does try it. With mighty strides he rushes on and on. Behind him is a surging world of human sympathy hanging in breathless anxiety upon his motions. He feels them, though he does not see them; and before him is a silent, grassy plain, and the still, cool evening air dashes against his face, the spray of a boundless sea. Onward he strains, for he is gaining. His heart beats more rapidly, and his breath comes short and hard, the only sound he hears in the deep stillness, for the soft grass is noiseless beneath his feet.

And now there is an ominous ringing in his ears; but he is abreast of the boat, and even passing it. He tries to mark the possible place ahead where he can descend, and, wading out, take nearer and surer aim at the back of the oarsman, and so hold him with the dread of it, that he will not dare expose any part of himself, but rather cease to row; and, by this means, time be gained for the rescue, coming on, to overtake him, when, farther down the river, in the darkening twilight, he sees,

from his elevation, a coming fleet of vessels in war-like trim. Hostile they must be. His people in their little boats are coming on to their destruction. Shall he stop and warn them, and so lose all chance to save the child, his guest's most priceless treasure? All thy great physical powers which God hath given thee, thou hast used so well; now use thy mental powers! Think, and think quickly, Bela! Remember the ruffed grouse. The Franconian cannot see the vessels; he sees only the pursuit. Thy wits, thy wits, man, quick!

"Oooo—!" a low moan rolls like distant thunder through the watching crowd behind; for his foot has caught close to the high bank, and down he rolls and pitches, falling in a helpless heap upon the sandy beach, limp and motionless. A cry of joy bursts from the Franconian; and, tossing the heavy boy once more into the bottom of the boat, he turns, and, tugging at the lifeless body of the Venetian, he drops the dead weight overboard; then with a sigh of relief he grasps the oars again. But horror! as he turns his breast full to the shore, Bela stands erect before him, his deadly shaft pointing at his heart.

"Mercy! mercy! for the love of Christ!"

"Row hither, instantly!"

Conrad obeys; but as he nears the shore, he

sees, by a glance behind, the bow relax in Bela's hand; and, giving a quick leap, he dives overboard; and, swimming under water, makes for the other shore. Bela wastes no time on him, but jumps into the boat, and seizing the oars, rows swiftly back to meet the pursuing party and to warn them.

Conrad had no sooner reached and climbed the other bank, than he discovered the coming fleet. He ran along towards them, and, wildly signalling, was taken up by them. He urged their instant attack upon the disordered Poles; but when he chanced to mention the return of Bela, their ardor cooled somewhat; and, a consultation being called, they decided to withdraw; in so great awe was Bela's prowess held through all that country.

And happy were the days, and lightly flew the hours of the King's honeymoon.

While the King and his nobles divided their time between the gaieties of the court and the stern preparations for a war of extermination on the infidels; and while the Queen was making the hours mark a rapid growth in the affections of her new friends and relatives; our little heroes and their guest found every day a play-day. Poor Beauty's life was a sore burden to her, and she made many violent protests against carrying three at once;

with such effect, too, that the lady-mothers were much perplexed, when one night they came softly in to view their tired treasures, to find so many brown and blue marks upon their little plump and rounded limbs; and they sighed long and deeply, thinking how the blows, that left so deep a color on the soft, white skin, would every year grow harder, thus forging their baby limbs into the "Iron Arms" of war.

But the boy's thoughts were not cast so far ahead. It was Geyza's delight to teach the others the art of swimming; and, though the waters of the Vistula were growing somewhat cool, their ardor overcame the chilliness. It was not long before both the younger boys could take several strokes without stopping, and Geyza had become so expert, as to play many a prank upon them. He would dive at a distance, and, making his way underneath the water to where they were standing, grasp their legs, causing them to shriek in terror for the moment, not knowing what monster had attacked them.

His tales of what he did, and what he saw and heard upon his journey to far-off Kief, were a constant treat to the others; Hekla, also, was a never ceasing wonder to them, displaying his suppleness in all manner of contortions for their amusement.

But when the bright days had passed away, and the Queen and her court prepared to return to Gnesen, and the King and his nobles bade farewell to their ladies fair; when the boys saw their armor-clad fathers mount and ride off in their pride and strength, the noblest of that warrior host, the glory of it and the sadness of it checked their boyish pranks; and a fog settled on their spirits. Nor was it lifted; till, arrived at Gnesen, the bustle of arranging the palace for the Queen's occupation gave a new turn to their thoughts.

Then it was not long before news began to come in from Masovia. One messenger reported the capture of Plock; another told how, driven from their towns, a remnant of the Pagans had sought refuge in a dense forest; and still another brought intelligence of how the allied forces had hemmed them in, and, after desperate fighting, had killed or captured the last surviving leaders of their stubborn enemy.

And now all was expectation and preparation at the palace; and one noon the bugles sounded from the watch-towers; and later, enveloped in a cloud of dust, a band of cavalry swept through the wide-open gates, amidst the joyous acclamations of the populace, and up the streets to the palace, through the arched gate-way, into the court, they

galloped. From the balconies waved bright banners, and down the steps lovely ladies sprang to welcome back their tired lords. The children crowded to their sides, and were caught up upon a shoulder, or taken by the hand, as all sought the cheerful and inviting great-hall for rest and refreshment, which latter was elaborately laid out on heavy oaken tables, and sent its savory welcome out to meet them.

CHAPTER XI.

THEN there was peace in Poland many years; and the gentle King Casimir strove to rule well the people who had called him so earnestly to his kingdom. He sought to better their spiritual condition by bringing wise men from the great monasteries of Germany and France, and placing them in the large towns, where they could enlighten the citizens in the knowledge of Christianity. Thanks to opportunities thus afforded, our two boys spent many hours of every day in mastering the Latin language; and ere long the Lady Gisela, with proud heart and glistening eyes, could show her husband such beautiful copies upon parchment, their own writing, as to claim his wonder and admiration. As the years rolled on his father's pride was stirred within him to see the

rapid and stately growth of his sons, and to note their choice language, such as comported well with the dignity of princes, while they talked learnedly of the great men of the past, and their doings. Since Ordulf had returned to Saxony, they had made such progress, that many letters now passed between them. One, written A. D. 1046, ran as follows:

"To My Ever Dear Friend and Brother, Ordulf:

"We are all happily well in Gnesen. Geyza hath grown so tall he mates the King, mine uncle; and Beauty he hath given me, as he can no longer answer for so tall a master as my brother. It is a spirited charger of the Arab breed, that Uncle Casimir is pleased to furnish him, black as the night, with long, flowing mane and tail. I would that thou could'st see him --my gracious brother-- as he sits astride of this new beauty like a gallant knight. There is no finer lord in all the court than he, save, always, my mighty father.

"There is much talk about the court now, concerning the news from Hungary. Almost every day some one comes from over the mountains, bringing tidings of the discontented spirit of the nobles there; and, as these people talk, my father's face grows anxious and excited. They urge his return to Hungary, as leader of a popular revolt; but

he ever answers, 'No, not yet is the time ripe.' Geyza tells me that he waits only for word from the English Atheling, Edward, to go at once. He waits so patiently, and yet so longingly, my heart aches for him.

"But, Ordulf, what a blessed thing is this 'Truce of God' that the Church has instituted! Ever since thy departure has the holy Bishop here been urging the King to its adoption. He says that for five years has France been blessed in its observance; and now that thine own Germany acknowledges its force, the King has at last proclaimed it here, and all our nobles have taken oath to hold it sacred.

"My mother wishes me to express her loving thoughts to the Lady Bertha, being heart-glad that she and the little Gertrude are recovered of their fever. May the Lord keep ever in thy memory thy loving friends, both Geyza and myself.

"LADISLAUS."

Even while this youthful scholar was putting into Latin words these thoughts of his, so far beyond a boy of his age in our day, stirring events were taking place in Hungary; events which were to bear in their train the destiny of this gentle writer, and those dear ones who occupied so much of his letter.

At the town of Csanad was gathered a crowd of excited men. Vatha, with a strong following, had set up a banner of revolt against the unpopular King Peter; and, as the news spread throughout the land, many nobles, with their knights and followers, came flocking to the scene, until the town became a vast camp. Many minds agitated the different leaders, in their attempts to organize, as to what they should demand. In one quarter a motley crowd surged round a rough orator, cheering him as he harangued with bitter invectives against the unpatriotic King, who could so enslave his country to the German Emperor.

"Look at him, the cowardly dandy! See him crawl to Henry's feet, and beg him for a smile! He would shine before the ladies of the Empire, would he? The Holy Roman Empire!—holy, forsooth! Whose is the crown, and whose the lance that this thieving King has taken from the treasure house of Hungary to buy a station at the German court, a shackle for his country? Shall Hungary bend her knee to rock this baby for his foster-mother? Out with him forever!"

And from the cheering crowd came cries of "Vatha, give us Vatha!" "Where is Andrew? send for Andrew!" "Bela, the mighty Bela!" "Death to Peter!" "Down with the Royal Pal-

acc!" "Burn Stuhlweissenburg, we want no kings!" "Down with the priests!" "No! no!" "Liberty! liberty!" "Burn the churches!" And, had it not been for the sudden arrival of a large body of knights, proclaiming a council meeting of the nobles in the citadel, blood might have been shed; so high ran the spirit of the different factions.

In the assembly soon convened greater order reigned. Each noble felt the great responsibility that rested with him; for there was no one higher than the other here to bear it. Each man's word had weight; and all Hungary would watch the balances. Many rose and spoke and all deplored the traitorous action of the King. Some advised waiting on the King in force, and compelling him to withdraw his act of enfeoffment to the Emperor, and to establish certain salutary laws. Others asserted that no faith could be placed in Peter; and that such overtures, if successful, would result in only temporary good; they, rather, urged the long-forgotten claim of Andrew to the crown, and instanced the strength of character which the two brothers had shown in the countries where they had taken refuge.

Why should they not recall these great-grandsons of Toxun, whose strength and wisdom they so

sorely needed? Some one counselled the abolishment of Christianity, as the cause of all the evil; but the greater portion of the nobles sprang instantly to their feet, and indignantly silenced the presumptuous Pagan as well as those who had applauded him. Vatha immediately rose, and in vehement language urged the recall of Andrew, as their King, and asked that he and his force might be deputed to accomplish the dethronement of Peter, and the occupation of Stuhlweissenburg in preparation for the coming of their new King.

The embodiment of action, he succeeded in gaining their consent to this proposition, and, waiting no longer on their deliberations, was soon on his way across the great plains to the broad Danube, followed by a mass of violent and blood-thirsty men intent on plunder and destruction, and held in check only by the fiercer spirit of their wild leader.

Skilfully had he tested the feeling of the assembly; and wisely had he restrained his Pagan impulses, until he had gained more power; but now, should the gods favor him, he would soon hold the situation in his hand.

At Stuhlweissenburg they found the gates opened to them by the affrighted citizens, and soon the streets were thronged with men hastening to

the palace; but here they were doomed to disappointment, for the bird had flown. Vatha needed all the energy at his command to keep his savage horde from sacking the place; and much destruction had been accomplished, and the palace had even been fired, before order was secured. The flames were subdued, and a party sent out in pursuit of the fugitive King. He was found at last in Zamur, and dragged back in triumph and derision to his capital. Here Vatha bound him with strong cords, upon his throne, and put his royal robe upon him, and a crown upon his head, and fastened in his hand a lance like that which he had given to the Emperor; then he faced and mocked him.

"Hail, mighty and puissant King!—cats-paw of the Christian Pope, puppet of the German Emperor! What would'st thou have now from the treasury? Thou hast taken gold and steel already; now mayest thou feel the iron of the nation that thou would'st betray! Ho, there! fetch ye the irons, that his eyes may gleat upon them."

From the crowd two men stepped forward, dragging after them heavy chains and manacles; and then two others followed, bearing between them a forge containing red-hot coals and branding irons. At this point a violent shudder shook the

frame of the unhappy King; and great beads of sweat broke out upon his face and neck; but he uttered not a word. His dark eyes were fixed on those of Vatha in proud defiance, but his lips were sealed.

"Ha! haughty Venetian! thinkest thou thine eyes can make a conquest here? I am no woman to melt beneath such glances. Curse thee, little man! canst find no pleasanter countenance to look upon than mine? Canst see a shadow of weak pity in my soul, that thou should'st gaze so constantly on me? No! not for thee, sleek devil that thou art! Here, Vratislaf! Black out the light from yonder evil eyes forever!"

A fierce attendant seized a red-hot iron from the forge, and started forward in obedience to his chief, but hesitated, in unconscious admiration of the courage of the King, whose eyes wavered not in their steadfast gaze on Vatha. Their intense glare unnerved that superstitious Pagan. Enraged, he sprang on Vratislaf and tore the iron from his hand, hissing, "Woman heart," between his teeth, and would have done the deed himself—when lo! above the throne towered a majestic form with deep-sunken eyes and upraised arm.

The spirit of the Mighty Dead again disarmed the cruel chieftan. His limbs trembled beneath

him; and, muttering, "Why comest thou to daunt me?" he drew slowly back, step by step, before the terrifying vision that only he could see, leaving his minions to complete without him the cruel torture of blinding the dethroned King. Let us leave to them the spectacle of his agony, thankful that such cruelty has long since ceased to be in Hungary.

A few days after Peter's blinding and imprisonment, Vatha held a council of the nobles present, which chanced to be mostly his friends and sympathizers; and brought before them the religious question, claiming in his opening address that Christianity in its very essence was a yoke upon the national freedom, and that its head, the Pope, would always drive them at his will. The only one who had courage to oppose him was the Atheling, Edward. He called attention to the glorious reign of Stephen, the most Christian King of the age; to that tower of national strength, the great Canute, whose Christianity had protected in its liberties every country that he governed.

"Aye!" sneered Vatha, "was it his Christianity or his kinsman's Pagan Humanity that saved thy puny life?"

"I deny that it was Christianity which prompted Canute to destroy me and my brother. It was rather the lack of faith, a dire inheritance

of his Pagan father, Sweyn. No! Christianity is synonymous with true liberty and national honor."

"How much of national honor has the Christian Peter? How much, the German Emperor, Henry, who seeks to crush the liberty of Hungary at any cost?"

"I fear that Peter wore religion but as a cloak. The Emperor knows not the needs of Hungary. He sees but anarchy or misrule among the people's party, and counts, as legitimate, the successor of King Stephen."

"'Tis plain to see thy sympathies are German. O, my countrymen! beware the seductions of an alien, an exiled Englishman, whose wife is kinswoman to the German Emperor! Let us cast our hopes upon the great-grand-sons of that mighty conqueror, Duke Toxun, and walk free, once more, in the religion in which he grew up, acknowledging the gods who brought us to this fair country, and who have kept us supreme in it against all enemies. There is naught better for me than the glorious faith of my ancestors!"

These words, and many more, stirred up the assembly to such enthusiasm, that they agreed unanimously to offer the crown to Andrew or to Bela, whichever would swear to restore the ancient worship. Edward, fearing trouble for himself and

family, also dreading lest Bela should be entrapped into the plans of Vatha and his party, hurriedly left the capital, with his wife, Agatha, and daughter, Edith, and fled to Poland. When Vatha learned of Edward's flight and his destination, he dispatched his ambassadors, in all haste, to Bela; expert and trusty men they were, to whom he gave minute instructions calculated to mislead Bela as to the religious issue (leaving that to be treated of when he came among them), and such as should throw suspicion on the loyalty of Edward, and give discredit to his testimony.

CHAPTER XII.

LATE one cold and blustering day in December, of the year 1046, Edward, with his family and attendants, sought admission at the gates of Gnesen. Struck by the noble aspect of the traveller, as well as by the beauty of the ladies, the obsequious warden dispatched one of his men to announce their arrival to the King; and, leaving others in charge of his post, took upon himself the agreeable duty of escorting them to the palace. He was a somewhat pompous little fellow, and labored diligently to express the dignity and hospitality of the town to these foreign guests, craving pardon for the inclemency of the weather, as though it were manufactured there in Gnesen; and, when the tired horse which bore the young and lovely daughter of the Atheling stumbled, because of

some loose stones in the pavement, apologies rolled out like gravel from a dump-cart. It was a shame! an outrage! The neglect, the carelessness of the town officials! He blushed for his town, his country, that so fair a guest should be so rudely shaken! He begged piteously for their forgiveness, and assured them, with many a pompous waving of the arms, and deep muffled tones intended to be solemn, that the King would certainly imprison the guilty man or men. The ladies, though weary with their journey, were so amused they could scarce restrain their smiles.

So it was in a very merry mood indeed that they entered the palace court. It chanced that Geyza and his father had just returned from an afternoon ride about the town; and a moment's glance discovered the two friends to each other. In another instant they were locked in a warm embrace. Edward then presented his wife and daughter, which latter blushed rosy red, as Bela said:

"My dear Edward, thy gentle heart, thy kingly birth, thy steadfast love, have blossomed to the full in this fair flower. Geyza, where art thou, lad? Come hither. This, Edward, is my first born."

"Thou art happy," said Edward, as he took the

boy's hands between his own and held them there, "in that thou favorest, in form and mien, so gallant a knight and gentleman as thy father."

Geyza hung his head in bashful silence, confused by praise so flattering in his ears, made doubly precious as coming from one whom he had been taught to love and admire. The Lady Agatha came to his relief by a gracious request, that she might avail herself of his assistance in dismounting; and then plunged him once more into a perfect tangle of awkwardness, by suggesting that he do the like service for her daughter, Edith. He had seen many beautiful young girls, but never one so like a delicate wild flower, so fair and fragile, with eyes like mid-summer skies. His arms felt and acted like those of a toy jumping-jack; and he would have been as likely to take her by the feet, to help her down, as not. But she, not waiting for him, leaped lightly down herself, with a modest "Thank you, Sir Knight," for his good intentions, which so completely bewildered the poor boy, he was fain to let his father do the honors for them both.

As Bela conducted the party up the broad steps and into the great hall, the bashful lad held the bridle of Edith's horse, and gazed abstractedly after them, his heart beating wildly with mingled

emotions of admiration for the ladies, and shame for his own awkwardness. He had hitherto felt the unconscious ease of a full-grown man; had taken the oath of the "Truce of God" together with his father and the other nobles; and considered himself a knight, *par excellence*, and a gracious gentleman, trained in all the delicate attentions to the ladies of the court, and the pride of his mother and the Queen. The tears started to his eyes, as he felt now how youthful he was—quite a boy still. He wandered off with the horses as the attendants led them away, reluctant to show himself again, and still longing to get another peep at the fair maiden whose wondrous beauty, of the Anglo-Saxon type, was so strangely enchanting to him.

Soon he heard his brother's voice. "Geyza, O Geyza! where art thou?" and Ladislaus, running up to him in breathless haste, exclaimed, "O brother! hast thou seen them? The English Edward!—and, Geyza, the be—autifullest girl! lovely golden hair, and deep, blue eyes, and cheeks so soft and white—O my! Just come in and see for thyself, dear brother." And so the two went in together, and joined the animated group about the great-hall fire, and looked and listened, while the Atheling told them of the exciting scenes enacted at Stuhlweissenburg.

The vandal-like nature of Vatha's actions, and the pitiable torture of Peter, together with the Pagan's words in council, had turned Edward's interest against the popular movement. This he showed plainly as the tale progressed. He said little about Vatha's plans, as regarded Andrew and Bela, however; for he desired a more private interview with his friend upon that subject. This was postponed, necessarily, till the following day. Before a good opportunity offered the next day, noon had come, bringing with it Vatha's embassy to Bela. Much time was spent in the ceremonious interview, by the addresses of the several ambassadors, Bela's questions, and the slow and studious answers.

One of the party, seizing an opportunity when Edward was not present, stated that it gave him sore displeasure to abide the presence of the Englishman who had been such a devoted partisan of Peter and the Pope and the German Emperor as well, whose kinswoman he had married; and that he was accredited with being the most skilful diplomatist in all Europe; it was rumored, indeed, that Henry III. had bargained with him for the possession of Hungary through his machinations, for which he would aid him to make good his claim upon the English crown.

This accusation Bela resented hotly; and the aged speaker pressed it no farther than to crave pardon for having given vent to feelings that stirred so deeply every patriotic heart in Hungary. Bela took it for granted, considering what Edward had so far told him, that his visit had been planned purposely to enjoy this, his friend's recall from exile, in his presence; and so, in order that he might receive the congratulations of his dearest friend, he asked permission to retire before giving an answer to the embassy.

It was then late in the day and growing dark; and he found Edward impatiently pacing one of the long porches that faced the court. The pale moon, struggling through the clouds, threw a ghastly light upon the pavement where he strode to and fro, and disclosed an agitation in the Atheling which, coupled with the want of the enthusiastic rush of glad sympathy he had anticipated, clouded Bela's soul with strange doubts, and brought the question to his trembling lips:

"Hast no joyful word for me, my more than brother?"

"O Bela, Bela! God grant thee strength to grapple with this so great temptation."

"How meanest thou, temptation? Is there any one who has better right than I and my brother

Andrew, to stand watch over the destinies of a people whose hearts beat with the same life blood as our own! Thou hast listened to their call; what hinders! Speak, man! Thou hast held me on the rack for many years; why hold me longer?"

A pained look came over Edward's face, as he answered gently:

"Patience, patience, my dear brother; thou need'st to wait but very little longer."

"Patience! patience! and again, patience! O man, I am sick to death of this word, patience! I tell thee, Edward, thou must not bar this gate against me, too! The barrier thou hast built to curb the mountain torrent has piled the waters up to such a height, there is no longer strength against the pressure; and but now the voices of my countrymen have started such a rift, 'tis useless to give warning; naught can mend the break or stem the flood. Yea! my soul has soared so high upon the wings of hope in the last hour, that it can see beyond the mountains; and I hear the beating of thousands of Hungarian hearts that have waited so long and patiently a wise and loyal ruler. The cloud upon thy face hangs like a mask before thee. O, Edward! thou art like a heavy stone upon the tomb of all my hopes. And must I roll thee from my heart, my friend, or else be false to Hungary?"

"O Bela! better, far better to be false to Hungary than false to God!"

"Then it is true—oh shameful thought!—that thou hast placed first in thy heart the Latin Pope? Now hast thou torn thy mask away! O my poor country, thou needest me indeed! And I will go to thee; nor false friend, nor secret foe shall stay me!"

"Nay! Bela, do not so misconceive me!" and Edward, placing a hand upon each shoulder of his excited friend, gazed steadily into his eyes and said, "Take counsel of thy noblest nature; let no ungenerous doubt cloud thy soul's vision, while I explain to thee the reasons—reasons, which, remember, thou hast not let me tell thee yet—that should make thee send refusal to this Pagan Vatha."

"Thou art all reasons, never action!" said Bela, drawing back from the calm gaze of the Atheling.

Edward, letting his hands drop from the repellent shoulders, and for the first time impatient, replied, "And thou art all nervous action without reason."

"Reason enough to dread the subtle threads of argument by which thou seekest to bind me to inaction."

"Thou canst not love a friend, and doubt him so!"

"No friend would seek to feed a hungry soul with such straw-like prejudices."

"Bela, thou art mad to-night! Hast thou forgotten that thou art a Christian?"

"No! nor that thou art in close connection with Hungary's enemy, the German Emperor; nor that other friends and brothers have sold their honor for the love of power."

Edward's face grew pale with suppressed anger; and yet he checked the impulse to retort, until he could make one more effort.

"Bela, in thy soul thou knowest that thou wrong'st me; but thou hast said that I was all reasons, never action; hear me now; thou shalt not give thine answer to these heathen, until the night has had time to cool thy passion."

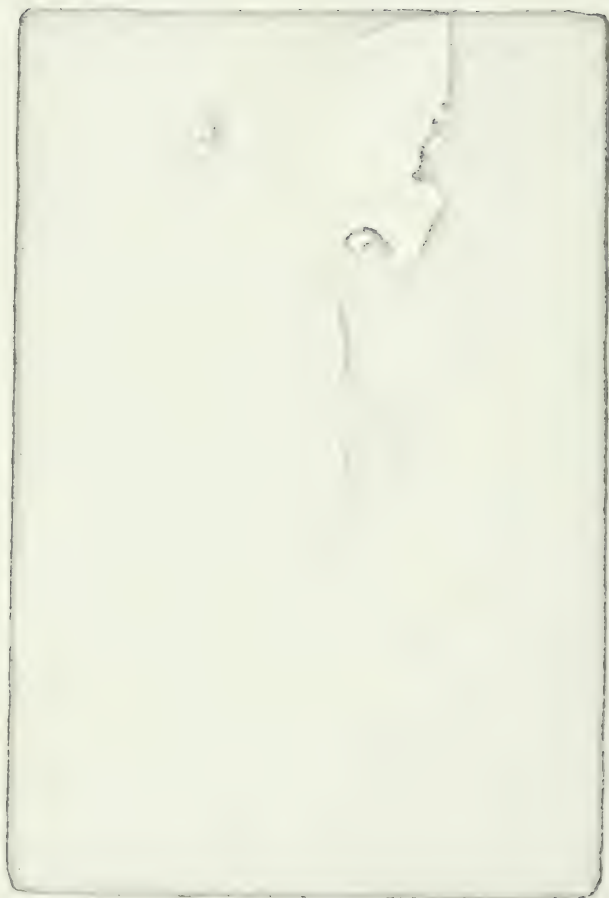
"Shalt not! Who will stay me?"

"I will."

"Ha! and how?"

"A Christian King commands here; and the King hath reason."

"Thou hast charmed the King, then, with thy fatal magic? O false friend! false friend! too long hast thou been playing with my destiny; thou shalt play with it no longer! Draw and defend



"Zodislaus rushed out upon the porch and in between them."
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thyself; for know that, now the lion in my breast is free, no power on earth or in heaven can keep me from my country!"

He had shaken Edward from him, in his passionate outburst, and had unsheathed his sword with the blind impulse of rage, as had Edward also, now all his patience gone; when Ladislaus rushed out upon the porch and in between them, crying:

"Father, father! Knowest thou not 'tis Wednesday Eve?"

The white face of the boy and his startled eyes held them both for a moment spell-bound; and in upon the hushed stillness broke the solemn tolling of the Vesper bells. Ashen pale, the father sank slowly to his knees; and, moaning, "The Truce of God! the Truce of God!" he crossed his naked sword upon his breast; and in low tones besought forgiveness for his almost broken vow. As anger had carried them to one extreme, so now deep contrition followed on the relaxation of their passions; and insensibly, as by the hand of God, the great mountain of doubt which fierce words had heaped up between their souls, was "removed and cast into the sea." A few loving, gentle words of explanation, faithfully accepted, made their minds

as one upon the question as to which way wisdom pointed.

The next morning Bela quietly but firmly dismissed the embassy, saying:

“Tell your master that his invitation is most agreeable to the exile Bela; that to return to Hungary has been the dream of his life; but, knowing of the Pagan tendencies that ruled the partial council, under the domination of its leader, he could not accept so equivocal a call. When the Christian nobles of Hungary send for me I will come. I love my country; but, only when Christ calls, can I follow!”

CHAPTER XIII.

EVERYBODY was looking forward to the fast-approaching Feast of the Nativity, for King Casimir had promised an elaborate celebration of this festival. There were to be games and mummers and a great feast upon Christmas-eve. Parties were sent out into the surrounding forests to gather greens; and the ladies were merrily-busy binding them in long garlands for the decoration of the great-hall. Our two boys were everywhere, and into everything. They especially delighted in the search for the mistletoe, climbing trees in a most reckless way to procure it. They made the sombre forest ring with their excited shouting, whenever a particularly fine bunch was discovered. The cold, bracing air brought the red blood to their cheeks, and the sparkle to their eyes. They would

chase and tussle with each other, knee-deep in the fallen leaves, whose every rustle was music to their ears; hide from the hounds behind the trees and bushes, and startle each other and the men with many a "boo!" in unexpected places. The great sledges, heaped up with boughs of fir and cedar, masses of holly, ivy, myrtle, and the wild juniper, were seized upon, as chariots, by the boys; and a fine picture they made, indeed, as they were driven into the palace court, throned in triumphal state, their bright-red tunics in relief against the deep-green background, like wood-sprites embowered in glistening holly and the misty-green and purple juniper. Nor was it surprising that the happy mother and the Lady Agatha and shy Edith, coming out to welcome them, should have thought them handsomer than any forest fairies ever were; and that the elder ladies, anyway, should have claimed the privilege, in advance of the season, which the mistletoe conferred.

At last, December 24th arrived with a deep fall of snow; and, as the sun sank low in the horizon, up the long street which approached the palace from the east, the red rays of the sun full ablaze upon them, came a gay cavalcade in slow and majestic march. Twenty trumpeters preceded in glittering, silver armor, on snow-white chargers,

blue silken streamers fluttering from their long, silver trumpets, and adorned with wide, blue scarfs of silk about their bodies. Their tall helmets were crowned with white ostrich-plumes, and their horses gaily pranced and curvetted about, as they approached. Behind them followed, in close and massive order, an hundred knights in golden armor and on large and powerful, jet-black steeds. The tall, golden lances, tipped with brilliant steel, shone in the sun like a forest of golden icicles; and massive plumes of black waved, like a cloud, upon their helmets.

Then came a huge float bearing a great, purple-covered throne between two good-sized spruce-trees, which were laden with strings of bright red and yellow apples, cranberries, peppers, and raisins, as well as many bright and curious decorative baubles. Seated upon the throne was a vast Titan, dressed in green and possessed of half-a-dozen arms, all of which were busy plucking the fruits and casting them among the scrambling multitude. I am afraid that some of the lads were just as greedy as they are to-day, and got the lion's share by rough pushing; but many a laugh was raised at those who secured the peppers, which caused much good-natured pelting of each other with that strong-scented fruit.

Next came fifty small lads in red robes, and steel helmets with red-winged ornaments, drawn in as many golden chariots, each by four dappled ponies. Behind them were a body-guard of fifty blackamoors in bright yellow dress and turbans, carrying shining cimeters over their shoulders, and mounted upon coal-black Arab horses. Behind them came a very pandemonium let loose; bears, lions, tigers, griffins, dragons, pigs, cows, donkeys, all cavorting on their hind legs and making hideous noises, but devouring no one; popes, priests, cardinals, kings, queens, clowns, fools, imps, and devils dancing hand in hand as though they never had disagreed, and never would disagree with each other.

Such a procession, Edith and the boys had never seen before; and, noticing the rather fearful shrinking of the former, as the motley throng drew near, Geyza took her hand, and, drawing her near to him, whispered gallantly that she must not fear, for he would let naught harm her. The soldiers, boys, horses, and chariots were swallowed up by the great archway of the palace-gate; the giant of the float, which had been left at some distance, dissolved before their eyes, and became a number of stout butchers in a pyramid of tubs, who immediately commenced to defend themselves with

poles and peppers against an assault of the mummers, who rushed at them from all sides and plied them heartily with snow-balls; while the whole lively scene was lit up by four great bonfires, one at each corner of the square before the palace. Through the rain of white balls and red peppers could be seen the awkward cows and griffins, pigs and donkeys, striving to climb upon the float, tripped up and hurled heels-over-head among majestic kings and bishops; and many a devil left his tail behind him in a butcher's hands.

Finally, however, the peppers were exhausted, the poles taken from the defendants, and the place capitulated. The two spruce-trees were taken from the float, dragged by the crowd through the gate-way and planted at one end of the great hall. The knights and ladies now assembled in the balconies and on the stairways of the hall to watch still farther the antics of the mummers who covered the floor below them. The vast room was hung with numberless festoons of greens; and gilded emblems, wreathed in holly and cedar, adorned the walls; while rows upon rows, pyramids, and suspended cones of candles, made the place as light as day. The mock-king or "Lord of Misrule," as he was afterwards called, held his court near a large fire which was built upon the

hearth in the center of the room, and sent a column of smoke up to the high vaulted roof, there to find exit through open windows.

At a certain signal from the Lord of Misrule, the trumpeter at his side sounded a call, and quiet fell upon the crowd, as out from a door came four black bears dragging a wagon canopied with evergreen; each bear was ridden by a fairy sprite with fleecy golden wings, who guided him with a silver wand across the floor to the foot of the throne.

"What hast thou there?" roared the great, fat, jolly Lord.

"May it please Your Majesty, they be many and strange parcels," said a long, lank, green lizard, "and methinks they bear certain characters writ upon them."

"Read them, Sir Lizard, read them out."

"Nay, Your Majesty, excuse me, for I have a cold--a--hem!"

"He! he! he can't read!" shrieked a pig.

"Then read thou, Sir Pig."

"Oh--ah--Your Majesty, I know not the language."

"Ho, there!" shouted the Lord, "let the herald proclaim, my daughter's hand and half my kingdom to him who will read what is here writ."

The herald, a tall, black raven, stepped for-

ward, blew a long horn and repeated the proclamation. There was a bustle in the crowd near a door through which a large, serious-looking owl had entered; and, as they made way for him, he strutted forward to the throne, stiffly bent one knee, and then, turning to the wagon, flapped his wings, and shouted, "To whoo! to whoo!" At this Ladislaus laughed outright a merry peal; and lo! the owl seized a package in his beak, and, with a quick jerk tossed it into the boy's lap where he sat in the balcony.

"Why, it has my name upon it," cried Ladislaus, "how strange!"

At this the Lord of Misrule clapped his hands; and, descending from his throne, solemnly placed a crown upon the owl's head, and led him to a seat beside his own. Then a bright-red flamingo came stalking in, followed by half a dozen boys in page's costume of green, whom he kept busy running here and there with packages as he called the names. Before long each one of the company was supplied with a gift. These consisted, mostly, of gold and silver ornaments, clothing or fancy cakes.

Geyza received a silver mug which his now-feeble grand-mother had been saving for him many years, an heirloom which had belonged at one time to Charlemagne; and, from its peculiar engraving,

it must have been a Spanish relic, gathered possibly by Charles Martel from the Moorish camp on the battlefield of Tours; for on it was the name of Roderick, the last Gothic King of Spain.

Ladislaus was enchanted with his gift, which was a beautiful copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew, richly ornamented; while Edith was made more than happy by a ring which was one of the sacred relics of England—one which her father had upon his person, when he was carried off from home; and which he had been told belonged to the lovely Editha, wife of King Alfred the Great.

While all were engaged in examination of their presents, the mummers retired, and long tables were brought in; and then, preceded by a procession of court officers, headed by the Lord of Misrule, came in, on a mighty silver salver borne high above their heads by two strong chief-butlers, a glorious, smoking boar's-head bedecked with sprigs of holly. The company were then seated; and soon the tables groaned with meats, game, fish, soups, and fancy dishes; and the feast began. The servants fairly flew around, conveying morsels of this, that and the other to the hungry people, who seemed, oddly enough, not to miss the absent forks, spoons, and napkins. There was much laughing and bantering talk about the board; and I fear too

much wine consumed to suit our present notions of decorum. But at a late hour the ruins of the feast were borne away, and the floor cleared once more for lively games of "tag," and "hide-and-seek," and "blind-man's-buff." A little before midnight there was a loud pounding at one of the doors; and the Lord of Misrule, when silence was obtained, demanded who was there.

"A child of the forest," came the answer.

"Enter, child, and welcome."

The door flew open; and twenty strong men dressed in green came, pulling in behind them an immense Yule-log. A child, indeed! It must have been a thousand years old; possibly a tender oak-shoot when the Babe of Bethlehem was born; and now cut down to add its testimony to the Saviour's birth. Ladislaus was lifted up on to the monster at the door; and waving a branch of holly in his hands, kept on and kept his balance, until they reached the fire in the center; when, jumping down, he lent his little might to roll it in. The hot fire was almost smothered by the load of this green, northern monster; even as the Teuton race had, in its ignorance years before, almost smothered Christianity. But the heat was too fierce below to die. The log hissed and sizzled; and dense, black clouds of smoke arose on every side; soon loud

snapping told how the warmth was entering the pores, how the fibres of the wood, before expansion's wedge, were opening out a way to the cold heart within. Brighter and fiercer grew the flames; louder did they roar, and higher did they leap; brilliant sparks sailed up in the smoke-clouds to the vaulted roof; and soon the whole log was one glowing glory, sending its voice to heaven and its light abroad. And the bells of the city, outside, answered, peal on peal; and Christmas Day was come!

All at once were heard children's sweet voices chanting, "*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*;" and again its antiphon, "On earth peace, good will toward men." Then the whole company of men and women present lent their glad voices, "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

And, when the Archbishop chanted solemnly, "O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world," all the people answered, "Have mercy upon us;" and so on to the end of that father of all Christmas carols.

For some time they watched the fire, their thoughtful faces reflecting the red glow, and softly talking to each other, how that the Light of the

world was born this day; and no one but Edward noticed a peculiar look of unrest in Bela's eyes.

"What weighs upon thy spirits, this glad Christmas, brother; is aught amiss?"

"Nothing, and yet I feel a dread presentiment, a sinking of the heart—I know not what. Edward, thinkest thou that all is well in Hungary?"

What "Israfil" was straying from his post in Bela's paradise? And could it be the rush of warning angel's wings that set his heart's chords vibrating with fear, on this fair night, when all Christendom was harking to the "tidings of great joy?"

Satan slept not; for at his instigation, even at that moment, a great Yule-log of hate and prejudice was being rolled upon the hearth-fires of that devoted people, crushing out the light and life of Christianity, and sending up a lowering cloud of smoke from church and chapel, way-side shrine and proud cathedral. Under the rule of King Casimir, all was holy peace in Poland here; but, just beyond the mountains to the south, beneath the rule of anarchy, raged the abomination of desolation.

CHAPTER XIV.

VATHA, having been informed that Andrew was on his way to Hungary in response to the first call from Csanad, had started out to meet him, with such followers as he could trust to support him in obtaining the desired pledge from Andrew, that he would restore the ancient worship. They met in Munkacs about the middle of December. Andrew was received with every mark of honor and distinction by his country-men; and, after a welcoming feast, he dismissed his Russian escort, and proceeded on his way to the capital, surrounded by Vatha and his attendants, and all unconscious of that noble's plans concerning him.

They had not completed their first day's journey before they came across a way-side shrine,

having been artfully led that way by Vatha's orders. Here Andrew halted to do reverence. An angry murmur rolled like distant thunder through the ranks; and Andrew, startled, turned to Vatha for an explanation.

"Their hearts are sore from too much oppression by the Papal power. They can abide no longer the Christian yoke."

"What meanest thou? Christ's yoke is easy for the believing soul."

"Aye, 'the believing soul'—thou sayest well 'the believing soul'—but Hungary contains few such bondsmen now. The direful spell is broken; and our souls are free, once more, to worship as our mighty grandsires did."

"'Tis impossible! thou art raving, man! No good can come from such an attitude before thy future King. As a Christian, I must needs reprimand thee for thy words."

"As a Christian, if thou chooseth so to be, thou mayest; but—harken;" and he drew him to one side and whispered, "It is unsafe for any one who would be King to reprimand the righteous wrath of those who alone can make him so. I have all love and honor for thee and thy house; but only as supporter of the ancient worship, canst thou gain the crown."

"Never, never, can I forswear my faith so! Nor will I go another step with these apostates, unless they bend repentant knees before this shrine."

In his indignation he spoke so loud that all heard him. With a grim smile upon his face, one huge fellow stepped forward; and, saying, "Thus do I bend the knee to all despotism," struck down the little crucifix with his battle-ax; another and another joined in the fierce sacrilege, and soon the tall, wooden cross which crowned the edifice was hurled prostrate to the earth, and spit and trodden on. Andrew stood aghast at this wild onslaught, so horrified he could not speak.

Then one Zapolya, raising his hand commanded silence, and thus addressed the recalled exile:

"We have called thee, Andrew, in hopes that thou would'st be to us a King, not bound by foreign ties or prejudices, but devoted to the interests of thy people. We know that the Roman Creed has cast its shadow upon thee, as it has upon us all; but we hope and trust that true love of country will break down the prison-wall which this hated religion has built about thine eyes, that thou may'st see the nations sorrow and humiliation, and lead us on, as thy great ancestors have done before,

to independent power and happiness. What sayest thou? All Hungary is at thy feet, an thou standest upon this fallen cross in sympathy with her children."

"Never can I wear a crown in such a cause!" said Andrew, pale with suppressed emotion.

"Thy brother, Bela, would not so refuse to serve his country" said Vatha.

"'Tis false!"—It was the sturdy mountaineer Almos, who so spoke out in Bela's vindication. He had but just arrived upon the scene; and, comprehending at a glance how the matter stood, had forced his way to the front in time to answer this insidious speech of Vatha's.—"Thy brother has too great a soul to truckle to such dastard counselors." He would have said more, and enlightened Andrew as to the schemes of Vatha, but his arms were pinioned to his side by rough and powerful men; and he was borne struggling away.

This gave Andrew some encouragement; and he said:

"Neither do I believe my brother would take the crown upon such terms."

The nobles of the party were growing restive under the irritation caused by this delay in acceding to their wishes; and one sneeringly replied:

"Thinkest thou that royal blood flows only in the veins of Michael's grandsons?"

"Aye!" shouted another, "give us a King whose heart is Hungary's, not Rome's;" and from somewhere in the now excited crowd came cries of, "Vatha! give us Vatha!"

Thought is more swift than light, sometimes; for, while this name was still upon the lips that shouted it, Andrew, catching a glimpse of Vatha's sinister face, read thereon the fluttering hope of power; saw a longed-for Kingdom slipping from his own grasp into the cruel hands of a fanatic tyrant; felt the shudder of his country; and, over-leaping the humiliation of the hour, subtly counted on the skilful management of future opportunities to redeem his yielding to compulsion now. In the same instant, lest some answering fire in Vatha's eyes should make all efforts on his part too late, he sprang upon the prostrate cross, unsheathed his sword, and, extending it at arm's length, cried:

"Enough! never while I live will I give up my birth-right! Ye have called me as your King; your conditions I accept; lead on! I'll know no God but Hungary; wherever she calls I will follow."

How different the answer of the younger brother! But Andrew had no such monitor beside him as had Bela.

A thundering cheer went up from all. Almos,

released, sadly withdrew into his mountain retreat, and the royal cavalcade moved on to Stuhlweissenburg. Carefully Vatha chose the line of march through such sections only as were favorable to the Pagans, thus impressing Andrew more and more with the powerful hold Paganism had obtained. The palace had been filled with guards and courtiers of the same convictions, and bands of fierce soldiery held the capitol in check.

With one pretext or another, the call for a general assembly of the nobles of the whole country was put off; while agents were secretly sent out to raise the Pagan portion of the country to arm against the Christians. Finally, pressing home his plans, Vatha urged Andrew to issue orders for the destruction of all churches and cathedrals in the Kingdom, thus to show himself, as one entitled to be the trusted King of a free people. It was on Christmas-eve that this conference took place. Andrew was alone with his powerful counsellor in an inner chamber of the palace. He vehemently protested against the cruel suggestion.—“Never will I suffer such a desecration in my Kingdom.”

“Much more must thou suffer, if thou would'st earn the approbation of thy people,” muttered the stern chieftain. “These dogs of priests resent the free talk and action of the nobles, and seek to stir

the people to rebellion against all authority. They fill the streets with long processions of moaning men, women and children, who flaunt their candlesticks and crosses in the faces of the honest soldiery, inflaming them to rage and derision; and, unless some pressure is brought to bear against these antics, there will be no restraining of the soldiers. Tear out this festering thorn and let all know thy will!"

"I think that it were well to reason with the priests."

"Reason! — they have no reason; and the quicker thou sendest them from the country, the better for thy safety. I tell thee, Andrew, I will no longer stand between thy half-hearted measures and the irate nobles; either thou must act or perish."

"Ha! darest thou say 'must' unto thy King?"

"Thou art not yet the King!" thundered Vatha. "Thy crown—thy life, depends upon thine answer! Wilt thou give the order to me now? Or shall I act without it, and leave thee to the mercy of my comrades?"

"O God, forgive me!" murmured Andrew; then, starting to his feet, he said, "Do as thou desirest.—I have put my hand to the plow, and can not look back!"

Vatha instantly departed; and ere midnight the terrible order had gone out o'er the land, "Destruction to all Christian Churches.—By order of the King."

As the bells broke merrily upon the still night air, in token of the Christmas-day, the celebrant monks and sacristans were startled from their solemn joy by loud shouts and sound of tramping feet; and soon a mass of men were breaking into all the churches in Stuhlweissenburg. Resistance met with certain death. The altars were overthrown and hacked to pieces, sacred vessels purloined, saintly relics scattered to the winds, and the torch applied to finish the dreadful work of devastation. Many a brave priest and bishop was murdered while standing up against this desecration, calling down anathemas upon the heads of the ferocious vandals. And sorrow—deepest sorrow filled the land that Christmas-morn, when it was known that this terrible trouble came upon them by order of the King.

Nor did it end there; the Pagans rushed over the land like a flood wherever they were strong enough to bear down opposition; and, in many places, a Christian's life was in hourly peril, and a priest could find safety only in seclusion.

The success of these violent measures was,

however, overestimated by Vatha. He felt that additional strength could now be obtained by convening a national assembly, for the terror of the Pagan power in and about the capitol would prevent the coming of many Christian nobles; the voice of the nation would be with him and his cause; Andrew would be forced to receive the crown with the most solemn pledges, or else—who knows? Was not he, Vatha, the foremost man in Hungary? With such thoughts and dreams prompting all his actions, he persuaded Andrew to put forth the summons.

About the middle of Winter, or perhaps in early Spring it was, before a sufficient number of lords and chieftains had assembled to make a national showing. Vatha watched each new arrival nervously, trying to test by many a stratagem his standing upon the all-important question of religion. This he found difficult to do to his satisfaction, for he could not be sure how much of their opinions they might deem it advisable to conceal.

The day for the opening of deliberations had arrived, and Vatha had so placed his trusty men as to overawe, if possible, any chance opposition. The council chamber presented a scene likely to impress anyone with the seriousness of the occasion. In the chair of state sat Andrew, dignified,

but sadly worn by the terrible trial his feelings must have undergone during the winter. Immediately surrounding him were many of the fierce spirits who had carried fire and sword, so recently, throughout the land, while many strong faces, young and old, here and there in the assembly, seemed so many isolated powers of unknown depth. When all were seated, the herald proclaimed silence, and Andrew, slowly rising, made the opening address.

He reviewed the condition of affairs that had prevailed under the government of Peter and of Samuel Aba; spoke of the action taken at Csanad, and thanked them graciously for the honor they had conferred upon him in recalling him from exile to become their King; he had come prepared to serve his country to the best of his ability and to the extent of his power, he only desired to know what the lords and gentlemen assembled considered necessary to the welfare of the country, and he would use every endeavor to enforce it.

Then Vatha rose and spoke upon the subject nearest to his heart, and called on all who loved freedom to support the measures the King had already so ably put in operation. To this appeal loud response came from all parts of the hall.

But one commanding figure rose in stern anger. It was the Lord of Presburg.

He maintained that the interests of Hungary and Christianity were identical; that the vast majority of the nation were Christians, and would never give up their faith; that what were the uncoerced feelings of most of those who had deposed Peter and extended the call to Andrew, was shown at Csanad, where such speeches as they had just listened to were hissed down at once. It was plain to be seen, by the absence of that sound to-day, that the reign of terror, through which they were now passing, had kept away many a noble, either from fear of death, or reluctance to support by their presence the apostate power that had convened this council. Here he bent his stern, accusing eyes on Andrew, whose face grew crimson under the rebuke; then he continued:

"I am here to protest against the coercive measures that have been adopted to restrain the assembling of a free and honest council, and to give fair warning that no King can hope to hold his power in Hungary under a Pagan standard."

He could go no further, for the noise of many voices which arose, some in encouragement, but most and fiercest in derision. Vatha called upon the King to test the temper of the council by a vote.

This was done, and the greater portion of those present drew up on his side, leaving a small minority upon the other. These latter, recognizing the inefficacy of further effort on the subject, ceased to oppose the Pagan party during the remainder of their deliberations; and, in fact, having made their protest in the matter of greatest moment, they took occasion to quietly withdraw for the purpose of taking counsel with each other elsewhere. Vatha, triumphant, carried all before him, and the Diet ended with the official crowning of Andrew, under promise to rule the Kingdom in accordance with the spirit of the assembly.

Andrew was now really King. The coronation was truly but a form, and still it was a form that carried enormous weight, as is shown by the history of other nations at that time. At any rate, it was to Andrew, like the possession of his star to a police-officer, or even more, like the "Open Sesame" to Ali Baba, for it was then that he began to formulate plans for the speedy overturning of the tables upon Vatha and his fellows. As chance would have it, too, Almos, brooding over the evil times that had fallen upon his country, saw often the unhappy scene again where Andrew was first entrapped. The sudden change that had come over Andrew had surprised and pained him then,

but the more he thought it over, the more he became assured in his own mind that Andrew could not have yielded so suddenly, unless he had seen some chance before him in the future.

Neither could he believe that all this evil which was accredited to Andrew could be laid at any other door than Vatha's. And so a determination grew to seek out the King, and aid him, if he found that his surmises were correct. He arrived in Stuhlweissenburg upon the day of the coronation, and, falling in with one of the delegates who had withdrawn from the assembly, learned the distressing news; and also that the Christian nobles had agreed to meet at Presburg and appeal to the country to unite in resisting this dreadful scourge.

To this man Almos communicated his belief as to Andrew's secret opinions, and advised a direct appeal to him, as their King. He lost no time in finding an opportunity to speak with Andrew privately. He found him worn, and sad, and weary; but a few words of sympathy, risked in brave trust of his true feelings, brought tears of gladness and relief to the King's eyes.

Such faithful help was all that Andrew needed. His plans were laid at once. Vatha was allowed to depart upon one of those hideous enterprises against his religious enemies, in which his soul de-

lighted; a strong and devoted body-guard was quickly but quietly provided for the King; gold was used freely among the existing soldiery, where it would do most good; the palace and the town were well strengthened; and the nobles, assembled at Presburg, who had acted upon the wise suggestion of Almos and had appealed to King Andrew secretly, were invited to come and bring with them to the capitol all the force they could secure.

A decoy message was then sent to Vatha by a swift courier, under promise of great reward for its faithful delivery, and in case of its resulting successfully. In this message the King apprised Vatha of the uprising of the people under the Lord of Presburg; stated that the feeling among the citizens of Stuhlweissenburg made him anxious for the immediate return of his powerful vassal, and begged him to hasten at once to his support.

This message worked so well that within a day or two there galloped up to the city-gates a force of travel-stained cavalry, headed by Vatha. Under the secret instructions of the King the gates were opened for their entrance, and an apparently zealous escort of the guard hurriedly led them to the palace. While Vatha, all unconscious of the stratagem, sought the presence of the King, his followers were divided, and led in broken detachments to

different quarters of the town, where they were, severally, surrounded by overwhelming numbers of the King's troops, disarmed and imprisoned, with such celerity as to leave them no opportunity of resistance. Vatha found his way into the presence chamber, where Andrew sat, attended by his new friends and courtiers. Still unsuspecting, he knelt to the King, exclaiming:

"I am come, your Majesty, to lend my aid against the traitor-lord of Presburg."

A deep voice answered, "The Lord of Presburg is no traitor to his King."

Turning to where the speaker stood, Vatha recognized the fearless counsellor who had so daringly defended his faith in the last Diet. Instantly he seemed to grasp the situation. One quick glance around showed him he had no friends. His violent persecution had made everyone there his bitter enemy, and into whatever face he looked, he saw nothing but intense hatred. Turning once more to the King, he said:

"Thou hast done well to call me hither, that with mine own eyes I might see how faithful to his pledges a Christian King can be, and how like tigers the followers of the Cross can look when they have trapped their prey! Thou, an Hungarian King?—indeed! Would'st see a gladiator strug-

gle 'gainst wild beasts in this thy Roman Coliseum? Where is thy master, the German Cæsar? He should share this, so rare sport, with thee. Ah! coward-fox, may thy friends and kinsmen talk as fair and be as faithful as thyself! Of thy Kingdom I wish thee joy. Thus do I do thee homage."

And now had Andrew's life been forfeited to the frenzy of the Pagan, had not two stalwart guards quickly intercepted, with their lances, the murderous blow which he delivered with all his ferocious might. Foiled in this endeavor, he turned, and, with irresistible strokes of his sword, clove his way through the midst of the astounded people, to a private door, and, familiar with the palace, soon reached a by-street, down which he ran, pursued by an excited crowd of knights and soldiers; gained the city wall, and, taking advantage of a watch-tower there, climbed the narrow stairs, beat down the astonished sentry and ran out upon the battlements.

For a moment only he hesitated; behind him were a furious mob and imprisonment or death; before him the wild, wooded plains and hills, liberty and, perchance, revenge. It was a fearful height. He shuddered; once looked back to where the foremost of his pursuers were just emerging

from the tower, and then, nerving himself, he carefully chose a grassy spot, and sprang for it from the wall. Those who saw him leap looked on aghast, never expecting to see him rise again. But while they held their breath, he struggled to his feet, and, followed by a flight of arrows, speeded across the grassy plain and disappeared within the shadows of the nearest forest. A body of troopers started out at once to search for him, but the accomplished woodsman eluded them and reached, ere long, an encampment of his Pagan friends, worn and weary, but burning for vengeance on the King who had betrayed him.

These years were trying ones for Andrew, but, inspired by the thought that he was now doing his full duty, and encouraged by the liberal and enthusiastic support which poured in upon him from the surrounding country, particularly from the west, he had himself properly consecrated and recrowned by the Primate of Hungary, organized strong and efficient armies, met and defeated the Pagans again and again, killed or captured all their leaders except Vatha, who, with his family, took refuge in the mountains of Transylvania, and, finally, was enabled to get complete and peaceful control of his Kingdom. No sooner, however, was this accomplished than ambassadors from the

Emperor, Henry III., laid before him a demand that capital punishment should be inflicted upon all those implicated in the blinding of Peter; that satisfactory apologies should be rendered to himself for this cruel treatment of his suzerain; and that Andrew should acknowledge his supremacy as "Holy Roman Emperor."

To do this would be to give up all he had suffered for, and to degrade himself in the eyes of his own countrymen. Nor could he hope to hold a crown that had been torn from Peter's brow for that same reason. He dismissed these ambassadors with the assurance that Peter's cruel punishment was abhorrent to his feelings, and that his persecutors had been, and should be, summarily dealt with when found; but that to acknowledge the supremacy of any other power was neither in accordance with his ideas of right, nor within his power to accomplish, for he owed his Kingdom to a people who would never abide such an act.

Henry's reply was that, if he did not choose or was afraid to grant a demand so reasonable, in accordance with past custom, and so necessary to the advancement of the Church, he, himself, would take the field with an army sufficient to conquer Hungary and compel him to his bidding. Nor was this an empty threat, for intelligence reached

Andrew, before long, that troops were being massed at certain points upon the frontier in vast numbers.

Tired out by the turbulence of his life since his return from peaceful and happy Kief, he had to prepare at once for a far more serious and dangerous war, and he felt the burden sorely, so much so, that he suffered in health. The forecast was very gloomy, till, at his wife's suggestion (she had come to him after his consecration), he bethought him of his dear brother, Bela, one who had proved himself an able commander and wise counsellor. Could he secure his help, he felt all would be well, for so great was Bela's reputation, that he knew to secure such a leader for the army would breathe new inspiration throughout the land. He, the King, need not risk his life unnecessarily, and, indeed, he was too ill to stand the rigors of the camp continuously. So he sent for Bela.

CHAPTER XV.

TO THE brother, waiting, powerless to act, these two years were almost a purgatory. Like heavy clouds in the horizon, lay Hungary's troubles. Ever and anon, fugitive priests brought the unhappy tidings. Wonder, doubt, dismay, attended on the rumors of his brother's faithlessness. He sympathized with him in his temptation, pitied, and still loved him through it all. And, when the tables turned, he accepted with joy the result of Andrew's stratagem, though he questioned the justice of his actions. Then hope grew strong within his own heart, for he said, "Surely, my brother will not forget me."

Days and months rolled on, and still no word. His heart yearned and struggled with his pride.

At such a tension were his feelings that he dared not talk upon the subject and drew away from all, silently brooding. Geyza, hopeful one moment, angry at his uncle's silence the next, talked gayly or ferociously, as the fit took him; while Edward sadly watched his friend's unnerved melancholy; and Edith grew bright or warm, in sympathy with Geyza, for they had become the very best of friends. And still no word from Andrew.

The road that led from Gnesen to Cracow was, at that time, lined with beautiful linden trees on either side from the gates out into the country many miles, and was a great favorite of all riding parties. On certain days of the week, during the Fall of 1048, it was the custom of the King to take an airing, surrounded by his attendant lords and ladies, along this beautiful avenue; and it was upon one of these occasions that Bela was persuaded by his wife and the Lady Agatha to join the party, for he had kept in very closely of late, and they feared for his health. The children, of course, never missed such opportunities.

It was a lovely day, for, though cloudy, the air was dry and bracing; the trees had been busy for some little time in putting on their glorious apparel, changing from deep green to bright scarlet, soft russet brown, blood-veined yellow and rich

garnet. Nor had they neglected to do honor to the Queen, but had strewed liberally the shady roadway with their cloaks, like gallant Raleigh.

To gallop at full speed against the cool, still air, with such a brilliant carpet beneath one's feet, and under such a glorious arch-way, with spirited horses, bearing graceful knights and dames before, behind and at one's side,—who would not enjoy it? Surely, it must have been a delightful dream to Geyza and Edith, child of an exile each, each seventeen years of age. There are moments when all pull rein, and sprightly conversation follows; there are flashes of wit and merry peals of laughter; snatches of song ring out, and many a riddle is propounded. They sit so gracefully erect, so easily, unconscious of the saddle, for they were born to it eight hundred years ago. The King smiles kindly in answer to the questioning look in some youth's eyes,—“On, gentlemen,” and all spring gladly forward into the long, vaulting center so exhilarating and delightful.

On one occasion, ere they started forward, Geyza bashfully claimed the privilege, for Edith and himself, from his Uncle Casimir and their parents, to lead the party on their next dash ahead. Excited by the freedom, they pushed on their horses somewhat faster than the others, and soon

had distanced them considerably; how much, they could not tell, because of the dips and windings of the road. So, when they slacked up and listened for the others, they were surprised at the deep stillness that surrounded them. The awful beauty of the dying season inspired them with strange feelings of nearness to each other.

"Edith, how still it is! how beautiful! There seems to be none else in all the world but just ourselves. Would'st thou be sad, Edith, if it were so?"

"But, Geyza, it could not be so; and if it were, thou would'st have no great future to look forward to."

"Aye, Edith; but it was not of the future I was thinking; the future hath for me no charms in all its store so great as this supremely happy moment."

"Not even Hungary's crown?"

"Not even Hungary's crown could bring such joy to me, as doth thy presence, as doth one look into the glory of thine eyes, dear love!" and Geyza took the delicate white hand that hung so gracefully by her side, holding the light whip, and so temptingly near; and he would have raised it to his lips, but she quickly drew it from him, saying:

"Fie, Geyza! Thou would'st not have them

see us thus? Hearest thou not the clatter of their horses' hoofs?"

"I hear naught but the loud, quick beating of my heart."

"I fear that we are indiscreet; let us return."

"Thou would'st not so cruelly desert this little world? Look, Edith, the very leaves are dying to hear more."

"Are they not, rather, blushing at thy impudence, Sir Knight?" But this time she allowed him to secure both hands, her cheeks rivalling the color of the loveliest leaves about them. He, happy youth, would have stayed thus to this day, perhaps; but she, alarmed, cried suddenly, "Listen! Geyza, surely, there is some one coming—and before us, not behind. I fear some evil may betide."

"Fear not, dearest, my lady; I will, with my life, defend thee!" and Geyza, hoping with all his youthful heart that this would be a chance where he could show his love and prowess for his fair lady, drew up in fierce attitude, with drawn sword, to await the coming of what sounded now like more than one horseman.

There came into view, sweeping round a curve, an old, grey-haired, grey-bearded man in hunting costume with two or three companions, knights of

foreign aspect, attended by a small body of light, Polish horse. Geyza's attitude, in the middle of the road, brought them to a halt. Surprised and somewhat nettled, the captain of the Polish troop demanded angrily:

"What means this blocking of the King's highway?"

Not relishing the tone this officer assumed, Geyza would not recede from his position, but taking advantage of the situation, answered boldly:

"Because it is the King's highway. His Majesty, attended by his court, is pleased to ride this way to-day."

"And art thou the King, youngster? and this fair maiden?—forsooth, she is a beauteous court indeed."

This was too much for Geyza. He touched his horse, and, as it bounded forward, he rose in his seat, and would have struck the astonished trooper with his sword had not the aged man drawn his own horse quickly between them, and with a quiet upraising of his arm checked Geyza's fury.

"Thou hast a spirit, lad, which goeth well with thy face and figure, and thy face, indeed, is strangely like the one I seek; perchance thou knowest if my worthy Prince Bela, the Hungarian, is with the King to-day?"

"My father?"

"Ah! Thou art his son then; this pleaseth me, indeed. Thou hast shown thyself worthy to bear his spirit, although somewhat rash. I pray thee, let us advance then, for I bring a message to thy father from his brother."

"A message! from mine uncle! What says he? Let me take it to him. Good sir, I beg you, pardon my discourteous welcome; and, if it be good news, oh, let me bear it to my father!"

"Here is the letter, child, wherein King Andrew asks his brother to come to him and share his joys, and, methinks, the burdens also, of his Kingdom. Dost thou think that he will come?"

"Think that he will come? Not all the world could hold him back! The letter, kind sir; give it me! Each moment lost is as a priceless pearl denied to my sad-hearted father!"

"Go, then! 'Tis fitting that his son should bring this joy to him."

Not waiting to hear more, all on fire, and tingling with suppressed emotion, he, with Edith at his side, turned and spurred to meet the on-coming cavalcade. Careless of all court etiquette they dashed right through the midst of the bewildered riders, past the King and Queen, to the place where in the rear Edward and Bela were quietly com-

muning as they rode along. Bela was the first to notice the unusual commotion, and when he descried Geyza galloping, heedless of the respect due to the King, and wildly waving a parchment in his hand, he exclaimed:

"What can possess the boy? What mad prank is he playing? And Edith, too! What holds he in his hands?"

"O father! father! 'Tis come! 'tis come!" And the wild boy leaped from his panting horse, and threw himself toward his father, sobbing and crying as he reached up the letter with trembling hand: "Mine uncle,—Hungary, has sent for thee, —my glorious father!"

With wonderful tenderness Bela gazed into his son's eyes, conscious of little else, for the moment, save the love he saw there. Mechanically he handed the letter to Edward, for his heart was too much in his eyes to read. Edward himself was so much agitated that he found it difficult at first to read.

The letter ended thus: "We were companions in misfortune; let us now share the joys and splendor of a throne. I have no heir or brother but thee. Thou shalt be my successor in the government. Come, then, dear brother; come at once."

Entranced, Bela sat on his horse like some marble statue, in the world and yet not of it, shadow of the past, inheritance of the future, linked only to the present by the bands of love. Slowly, the ice, that seventeen years of patient waiting had formed about his heart's desire, melted and gave way; his tall frame quivered from head to foot, and his sad, beseeching eyes sought every loving face about him, as though the new-born hope that fluttered there scarce dared to fly. To the mute question, Edward, with tears streaming down his cheeks, and taking in his own, Bela's other hand (Geyza had never ceased to cling to one), gave answer:

"Yes, patient, faithful, noble friend, now nothing, nothing stops the way."

Gently Bela released his hands, and, stretching his arms wide open, leaned far forward in his seat, while choking with emotion he found utterance:

"Nothing—keeps me—now! Nothing—holds me back! All, all the cruel, cruel bars and walls are down! O my country, my own dear home! Can I—can I really come to thee?—Geyza, child," and his swimming eyes looked round, "little Ladis, darling, — Gisela — Edward — why, my friends, I — I — am really — really going home! Pardon me, dear loved ones—I—I scarce know

what I say" (with a deep sigh). "I am so happy! Oh, so happy!" And, laying his head upon the English exile's shoulder, he sobbed for joy.

'Twas but for a few moments only that he thus gave way. All his manly strength came back to him, filling his gigantic stature to its full height, as he sat upright, glorious in the kingly grace which perfect joy gives all men.

He received the congratulations of them all, as they gathered round him, the King and Queen and all their company, for they all loved him; and, finally, Geyza bethought him of the grey-bearded stranger who had modestly kept in the background, and brought him forward. Bela knew him at once.

"Almos!"

"Yes, my Prince, the last of thy countrymen to bid thee farewell, the first to bid thee welcome back."

"As I look at thee, kind friend, it seems as though the very mountains had come out to me, in all their steadfastness and grandeur. Your Majesty," turning to the King, "this is the man of whom I have often spoken, to whom, as a fugitive, I fled long years ago. He kept me in his care for many days, and it was by his advice I sought this land and won the kind interest and protection of

thy father. King Casimir, I have served thee and thy country with all my strength and will for over sixteen years." He paused and looked around upon his wife and children. "Poland, indeed, hath given me more, far more, than I can ever hope to repay. But she is now at peace, whilst Hungary—; what sayest thou, Almos?"

"Her enemies are gathering in force upon her borders, her people are resolute and brave, but the King is ill, and he cannot lead in battle; he needs the strong help of his mighty brother, and he feels, as doth everyone, that all hope depends upon Prince Bela."

"Thou hearest, Brother Casimir; have I thy permission to depart?"

"Indeed, thou hast, and gladly would I send with thee a strong contingent, but it would ill comport with the friendship which exists between ourselves and Germany. However, we will send thee forward with hearty cheer and wish thee all prosperity in thine endeavors. Come, gentlemen, let us return to Gnesen, and make a joyful feast to celebrate the occasion, for howsoever sad we feel to contemplate the loss of our dear friend and brother, we will the more rejoice, for his sake, in giving him 'God speed.' And, Brother Bela, thou

wilt spend a merry fortnight with us ere thou say'st farewell."

"Pardon me, O King! if what I ask seem foolish or ungracious. My horse's head is turned toward the south. I beg of thee permit me to go now, at once. My face is set, I cannot bear to turn. Grant me this boon, I pray thee. I am prepared sufficiently, much more, indeed, than was I when I left my country."

The King, astonished, sought to reason with him.

"Surely it must not be said that Poland's King neglected to grace the departure of Prince Bela with fitting ceremonies. We would give thee a bright, joyous feast, and show thee honor."

"No feast could be more joyous to me than the bright faces of these kind, sympathetic friends; nor could they more honor do me than, in recognition of my strong desire, bid me farewell now and here—here where my message met me. O King, the oaken bow is bent to its full strength, the cord is loosed from the hand of fate, and the arrow must fly forward!"

Catching the pathos of this strange desire, the Queen lent her entreaties to his cause, and, after much discussion by all parties, plans were adopted to coincide with this arrangement. Bela, with

Geyza, started on at once, escorted by Almos and his Hungarians, leaving Ladislaus and the lady Gisela to come later under the protection of Edward, together with his wife and daughter, and to be accompanied also by a Polish escort, to the frontier, where Bela would await their coming. The pain of parting from the old grandam, Ryxa, had already taken place, she having died peacefully the year before.

There was also another figure which was almost always forgotten upon great occasions, who yet managed to turn up and was never left behind. This was Hekla. He had been keeping in the back-ground until now, but no sooner had Geyza and his father really started, than, with much bemoaning that he should be obliged to leave his comfortable quarters in Gnesen, he spurred on his sorry little nag, and clattered after them, causing both parties to draw rein and look to see whence came so great commotion. The laughter which this comical episode occasioned took off somewhat the sad edge of parting, and each company went its way in high spirits.

That ride to Cracow through Poland — how shall I describe it? That quiet central figure was always looking forward, never ready to stop and always eager to start at every stage of the journey;

speaking rarely, and then only to ask questions of Almos, who was ever at his side, and whose talk was always on the one absorbing subject. Geyza was an interested listener also, but his attention was more or less diverted by the incidents of travel, the strange faces met upon the road, the occasional starting of a fox or other animal, the quiet villages or busy towns passed through or tarried in for meals or rest at night, a gay wedding procession or, perchance, a funeral—all the many doings of an active, peaceful people, which drifted by Bela like the waters of a dreamy sea, parted by the sharp prow of his ship of fortune.

Arrived at Cracow, nothing could persuade him to abide in the town. He must needs pitch his tent on the summit of the Kracusberg, where he could watch the distant snow-caps of the Carpathians, no longer the cold barriers that shut him out, but the towering, castellated walls of his kingdom and his home.

One day's journey further brought them to the Jablunka Pass. At the strong castle which guarded this gate-way into Hungary he waited, according to agreement, for the arrival of Edward and his convoy. Much of his time he spent in climbing the heights about, and feasting his eyes upon the scene. Before him was spread out the lovely

valley of the Waag. The foliage was mostly green as yet, upon this side of the mountains, but here and there a maple glowed, fiery-red, upon some distant hill-side; a town or two could be distinguished, and a few castles reared their massive towers above the tree-tops at different points along the river-bank, while the beautiful valley broadened and lost form in the misty, far horizon.

The glad news of his arrival flew throughout the land. The lords and prelates in the vicinity hastened to bid him welcome to the home of his youth, and from Stuhlweissenburg came a magnificent troop of chosen knights, dispatched by Andrew as an honorary escort to conduct him to the capitol. At the same time arrived Edward with Ladislaus and the ladies, and after a day's rest they all started forward.

What is this picture upon which the early-morning sun shines in a golden blaze of glory? A brilliant concourse of plume-crowned, armored horsemen; hundreds of shining lances, the road-side lined with enthusiastic, shouting peasantry in bright, holiday attire; and three central figures, the majestic father and his two stately sons.

Look at them well, O Hungary! as they come riding down to thee in all their beauty! Guardian angels of thy glory and thine honor are they; three

immortal souls, aglow with the noble inspiration of pure patriotism, bearing thy future destiny in their hands. Invincible, indomitable, patient courage shines in every lineament of the father's strong and rugged face, though the lips are quivering and the eyes are swimming in answer to the glad shouts of his people. See, in the proud, clear eyes of the elder son, unselfish, generous justice; and, in the younger's rapt countenance, pure wisdom.

Coming to thee now, in thy hour of need, with strength to do, and power to conquer, and grace to rule; loyal—every drop of their life's blood, every breath they draw—to the true interests of a people whom they will never desert and who will never cease to love and cherish their dear memory! Coming to live with thee, to share thy joys and sorrows, to fight, to work, to bear injustice bravely, patiently; to rule honestly and carefully, as kings should rule; and to act like true gentlemen, always, to the end of their days.

FINIS.

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